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The Theme of Exile in Chateaubriand's, Tocqueville's and Beaumont's American Romantic Texts. A Structural Analysis

Abstract: The present article constitutes an approach to the subject of intentional and involuntary exile in the romantic works "Atala," *René*, *Les Natchez* by François-René de Chateaubriand, *Course au Lac Onéida*, *Quinze Jours au Désert* by Alexis de Tocqueville and *Marie où l'Esclavage aux Etats-Unis* by Gustave de Beaumont. Exile will be examined as a proof of love for the country (*philopatrie*), as a weakness or unwillingness of the French people to maintain their presence on the American soil, and as a farewell to the fallen nobility. My study will be based on the structural analysis of myth as developed and applied by the French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. The repeated components will be retrieved, classified and analyzed in order to demonstrate that the romantic devices and subjects used by the writers, are a mere pretext, a means through which Chateaubriand, Tocqueville and Beaumont transmit their philosophical ideas and socio-political ideologies regarding America and France.

Keywords: exile, romanticism, colonialism, Chateaubriand, Tocqueville, Beaumont, America

Introduction

Exile is a *leitmotif*, a recurrent theme in Chateaubriand, Tocqueville and Beaumont's romantic texts and **the analysis of the myth of Oedipus** will be the basic methodological tool in order to approach and understand its latent but very substantial meanings. According to Lévi-Strauss, the search of recurring motifs in the content of a myth, leads us to its basic structure, "to the scheme of relations between components and events" (as qtd. in Rotenstreich 489). The aim is to detect the repeated patterns, identify the hidden forms and finally comprehend and interpret the latent meanings. Levi-Strauss' structural theory relies on the fact that underneath simple narrations that initially seem unconnected and irrelevant, we can trace intrinsic, general and stable conceptual truths and structures that are being gradually exposed, once the links between the components are disclosed. To prove this argument, Lévi-Strauss structures the myth of Oedipus as a musical score which can be read horizontally as well as vertically (213). The horizontal approach orientates towards the myth reading, while the vertical approach reveals its hidden secrets and leads us to its better understanding:

Cadmos seeks his sister Europa, ravished by Zeus			
		Cadmos kills the dragon	

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	The Spartoi kill one another		
			Labdacos (Laios' father) = lame
			Laios (Oedipus father) = left-sided
	Oedipus kills his father Laios	Oedipus kills the Sphinx	
			Oedipus = swollen feet
Oedipus marries his mother Jocasta			
	Eteocles kills his brother Polynices, despite prohibition		
Antigone buries her brother Polynices, despite prohibition			

The information contained in each vertical column, has a common denominator. The first one manifests "overrated blood relations," meaning enhanced familiarity overriding acceptable rules, while the second column displays "underrated blood relations" (215). The third one refers to chthonic monsters that have been exterminated by the myth's heroes, implying "the rejection of man's indigeneity," and the fourth column demonstrates the meaning of the heroes' name, suggesting "difficulties in walking straight and standing upright" (215). Lévi-Strauss reaches the conclusion that the myth of Oedipus "has to do with the inability of a culture, which holds the belief that mankind is autochthonous ... to find satisfactory transition between the theory and the knowledge that human beings are actually born from the union of man and woman" (216). Following Lévi-Strauss' example, we will try in our turn to retrieve and isolate in all five texts, the redundant elements that initially look irrelevant, insignificant and ideologically benign. Afterwards, the findings will be regrouped and studied in order to proceed to horizontal and vertical readings of a complex picture, disclose the hidden links of a common chain, and finally prove our initial arguments, that exile is a proof of love for the country (*philopatrie*), a weakness or unwillingness of the French people to maintain their presence on the American soil, and a farewell to the fallen nobility.

Exile in Chateaubriand's Novels as Devotion to Homeland

In all three Chateaubriand's novels, René as writer and as fictional hero, experiences absolute exile. René-François de Chateaubriand is a French *émigré*, one of the nobles who left the country after the Revolution, finding shelter in England from 1793 to 1800. Having lost his prestigious status, he makes a living teaching French. His family had been jailed during the Terror period, while his brother Jean-Batiste and his wife Aline Le Peletier de Rosanbo, Malesherbes' granddaughter, were decapitated in 1794. Opposed to the Enlightenment and the ideas prevailing in 1789, he is distressed by the social and political upheavals that succeeded the collapse of the Ancient Régime and by the loss of the French Colonies. To his great chagrin, Chateaubriand realized that the French nobles who fled to America after the Revolution, had not been able to find as favorable conditions as expected.

The French writer chooses to ostracize from his novels any element related to his contemporary America, retaining as exclusive décor its paradisiacal, exotic image and as principal figures the natives, the

"natural men." He evicts the newborn American nation, demonstrating provocatively his indifference towards the modern political and economic miracle, so popular in his country during that period. Yet, young Chateaubriand's visit to America was not only a romantic, but also a political experience. He confronted what Rousseau called "civil society" ("société civile"), the political formation based on "people's general will" ("volonté générale"), while being at the same time introduced to this new society, which did not really differ from the European one (Barbéris 95). His romantic, homonymous hero, René, is also a self-exiled individual drawn to America by his romantic melancholy, the uneasiness of his intense feelings and passions, the difficulty in fitting into civilization's norms and in tolerating the superficial sociability of people. Detached and pensive, he finds refuge in the reverie, the solitude, and the contemplation of unspoiled nature, as Rousseau did earlier in his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (*Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*).

René as hero, as René the writer, seeks the natural, asocial and apolitical condition, the primitive and organic universality, which are perfectly harmonious with the unity of self. According to Rousseau, "the natural man is a totality for him; he is the numerical unit, the absolute completeness which is relative only to itself or its kind. Civil man is nothing but a fractional unit which depends on the denominator and his value is in his relation to the whole, meaning to the social body" (*Emile* 11).[2] In his trilogy, Chateaubriand rejects the social body, as a disruptive factor of the primitive condition, in which dispersed but autonomous and self-sufficient individualities enjoy freedom and joyfulness in nature. Their central characteristic is the state of "love of self" ("amour-de-soi"), a feeling always directed to well-being and compassion.

In his three romantic works, fictional, as well as real, he is full of bitterness and nostalgia for the loss of the homeland. The exile of the fictional noble hero René, who seeks the company of the equally noble and innocent savages, starts with the symbolic distancing of the canoe from the shore, carrying the young man and the wise, blind primitive Chactas. The latter is an honorable chief of the Natzchez tribe, "devoted ally" of the French forces in America. The Natchez' organizational structure was hierarchical, despotic and theocratic as the French state at the time of the Ancient Régime. Therefore, the canoe crossing, symbolizes on the one hand the passage to an aspired new life, and a search for a potential new kingdom (Lowrie 755), and on the other hand an imaginary return to the past, to the reinstatement of aristocracy and the Bourbon House. Besides, on both sides, mirrored confessions made from René to Chactas and vice versa regarding their wandering experience and the loss of their cherished persons, denote a profound nostalgia for the past and the yearning for home, which for Löwy and Sayre, are central features of the romantic attitude (147-151). In the last part of "Atala," the narrator, who may be Chateaubriand himself, reminisces: "Oh! How tears are shed when we leave from homeland" ("Atala" 68).

Chateaubriand himself becomes an outcast due to his romantic predilection, his political beliefs, social status and the extremities of the Terror. He proceeds to a self-inflicted exile from his own country, experienced both as liberation and as restrain of freedom. Exile for him is a chance to escape violence, anarchy and the extermination of the *noblesse* in France. Displacement though, implies deprivation of his family, his religion, his country, the aristocratic values and traditions: "All is there in the enchanted reveries into which the sounds of those bells of home plunge us: religion, family, country, the cradle and the grave, the past and the future" (*René* 142). In that sense, exile becomes a trial for love for someone's homeland and a mark of virtue. In his extended essay *The Genius of Christianity* (*Le Génie du Christianisme*), the writer maintains that among all instincts, love for our country is the noblest (595). The obsessional repetition of the theme of the loss of homeland is intrinsically linked to the extinction of the Ancient Régime and the post-revolutionary socio-political transformations. Chateaubriand, despite having been classified as a great romantic writer, constantly implies in his novels that no adventure, wandering

[2] All translations in this paper are mine

or travel can replace the love for someone's birthland. All the vital related elements, such as religion, ancestors, traditions and established institutions are closely connected to a country, and once gone, the man becomes adrift and dispossessed (Chinard 300).

Rousseau, who deeply influenced Chateaubriand in his early novels, considers that patriotism derives from virtue and its subsequent achievements: "It is certain that the greatest miracles of virtue have been produced by patriotism: this fine and lively feeling, which gives to the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions." (*Discours sur l' Economie Politique* 15). He argues that if we aspire to render all citizens virtuous, we should encourage them to love their country, since homeland is the mother of all (16-17). Rousseau relates patriotism to the "amour-propre" ("love for oneself"), and contrasts it with "amour-de-soi." A person, in his original state, feels natural passions, which are God-given and among which the noblest is the "amour-de-soi" ("self-love") defined as:

> The origin of our passions, the root and spring of all the rest, the only one which is born with man, which never leaves him as long as he lives, is self-love; this passion is primitive, instinctive, it precedes all the rest, which are in a sense only modifications of it. In this sense, if you like, they are all natural. But most of these modifications are the result of external influences, without which they would never occur, and such modifications, far from being advantageous to us, are harmful. They change the original purpose and work against its end; then it is that man finds himself outside nature and at strife with himself. Self-love is always good, always in accordance with the order of nature. (*Emile* 159)

The natural passion of "amour-de-soi," always in harmony with morality and order, is undermined by the advent of "amour-propre," a social product that renders man degenerate, villainous and egotistical. The civil man acquires false needs and attributes excessive importance to acceptance and admiration of others. Inasmuch as we cannot free ourselves from our passions, we have to focus on the only element that can reconstitute man's contact with his natural state, the love for his homeland ("philopatrie"). Rousseau focuses on the wide community of men, and invites them to become members of a homeland that they will cherish with natural passion, equal to the one they felt for themselves before transferring to civilization. He urges them to join an imaginary community, and feel in close companionship with others. René overflows with love for his country—a passion that combines positively virtue and the pure and benign passion of "amour-propre" (Engel 524) and hunts for unity in his place of exile. The Natchez tribe and America's wilderness represent the symbolic space, the symbolic link that leads him to imagine, to picture that he is a valuable part of a collectivity. The fact that Chateaubriand involves his romantic hero René in an armed conflict against his own compatriots is a proof of commitment to the general will of his new homeland and the new community to which he belongs.

Chateaubriand's exotic geography is the space *par excellence* of the main characters' external and internal exile. The term "patrie" is frequently repeated, not only by the natives, but also by René, and along with the nostalgia this word implies, it becomes the bond that forges strong relationships and affinity between him and them. The abandonment of France and of his beloved sister, the loss of the French colonies, the Natchez defeat and their subsequent relocation, Atala's and Chactas' uprooting, are decisive events that confine the heroes to a state of permanent exile, never to be reunited with their home. We could consider Chateaubriand's American trilogy as a *lamento* about lost countries, discarded cultural and social identities, families' dissolution and the distorted understanding of Christian faith. The grief of loss is a concluding, but also an introductory pattern manifested each time through the use of collateral confessions, which awake memory, always related to disillusionment and nostalgia for the motherland. According to René Girard, the end of each novel is a memory, a "panoramic vision" and at the same time an emerging inspiration (333).

A Structural Analysis of the Theme of Wandering and Exile in Chateaubriand's American Trilogy: An Impossible French Presence and the Innuendos for the Vanishing Nobility

As we have mentioned earlier, in Chateaubriand's American trilogy, not only the end, but also the beginning, are connected with the theme of the exile from home and the deprivation that this exile entails on all levels. The recurrent elements that constitute the motif, the mosaic of exile, can be depicted as follows:

Relation between the heroes	**Reason for exile**	**Place of exile**	**The end of exile**
René Siblings related by blood. **Amelie**	Romantic melancholy Incestuous passion for his sister	Woods	Death
	Incestuous passion for her brother	Monastery	Death
Chactas Step siblings unrelated by blood **Atala**	War between Indian tribes Romantic passion for Atala	Woods	Death
	Romantic passion for Chactas	Woods	Death
René Step siblings unrelated by blood **Célouta**	Romantic pursuits and need to integrate with the noble savages	Woods	Death
	Romantic passion for René	Woods	Death
Natchez tribe Pseudo-siblings attached members of a small community	War between the French and their ex-allies, the Natchez tribe The Natchez relocation after their defeat	Woods	Death
Observer (René) Pseudo-sibling attached by compassion for the wandering tribes.	Romantic melancholy Self-exile	Woods	Impasse and probable death

Romantic passion is defined here as an unrealized, strong desire, beyond all conventions and reason, that triggers an intense action and evasion. Similarly, romantic melancholy is an estrangement, the difficulty of belonging somewhere and the intense searching of the internal self. From the table above, it can be remarked that the heroes are possessed by a romantic unconventional and irrational emotion, which makes them decide to abandon home. We must also keep in mind the strong symbolisms in the

novels, referring mainly to death, as for example, René's crossing of the Meschacebe river in a canoe led by the blind Chactas in the beginning of "Atala"'s narration, and Rene's impasse at the waterfall at the end of the narrative.

Rene's psyche, that of the author's and that of the fiction hero, are framed by a water circle, starting from the writer's family house by the sea in Saint Malo, continuing with the overseas trip to America, followed by the canoe crossing to another place, to another way of life and completed by the Niagara Falls, an aquatic torrential obstacle and impasse that signals the end. The idea of a degenerating evolution towards an end, a counter-argument of the *Philosophes*' idea about unstoppable progress, is exhaustively analyzed in Chateaubriand's *Essay on Revolutions* (*Essai sur les Révolutions*), in which he argues that the historic facts follow a circular direction where each step forward confirms the steady course to disaster. We walk only towards a forthcoming turmoil and disorder, constantly and inevitably repeated.

Two elements are preponderant in Chateaubriand's romantic texts: the woods and water which are both a refuge and a curse, as the heroes lose themselves in the infinity that reflects their own internal void. The sublime landscape favors but also cancels their plans, covers and exposes them, makes them dream about and at the same time face reality. In *Water and Dreams* (*L'Eau et les Rêves*) Gaston Bachelard refers to Jung, who considers water and the tree as mother symbols. An organic material such as wood that has been sculpted to form a canoe, and the glide on the river's quiet water, is a condition through which maternal symbolism is doubled (Bachelard 100). Water communicates with the forces of the night, of death, but also of resurrection. As cited in Bachelrad's study, Jung in his book *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* (*Métamorphoses et symboles de la Libido*) claims that the dead return to their mother womb so that they can be reborn. Death in water is related to what Bachelard calls the "Ophelia complex," albeit connected with the feminine psyche. The individual is delivered to a liquid substance, floating to his own tranquil suicidal death in a state of reverie without any feelings of pride or vengeance (Bachelard 113). René's voluntary dislocation through water balances between a demise and a yearning for a rebirth ex nihilo, a self-destruction and concurrently a will to redress. The aquatic symbols depict the passage to another life, to another state, with fluid, unstable, ephemeral and changeable characteristics. The waterfall in the last chapter of "Atala," with menacing and rustling water is an allegory of the dead-end of wandering, the deadlock of exile and the vanishing.

The blindness of Chactas is related to the darkness, a condition that Rousseau analyses controversially in his book *Emile*. On the one hand, Rousseau considers visual acuity as the only state that confirms impressions gathered by the other senses, and on the other hand, he maintains that because this sense is sovereign, it demotes all the others forcing them in malfunction. He also characterizes vision as elusive, due to the rapidity of the perception of sight. Blindness is considered as infirmity and at the same time as a means to sharpen other dexterities regarding the external stimuli perception, as for example the sense of touch, which is safe and reliable (Rousseau, *Emile* 92). Chactas' blindness is a different aspect of exile, a defect implying ignorance, limited access to reality, isolation and estrangement. Concurrently it constitutes an acuity related to wisdom, intuition and clairvoyance:

> in the dark it is their turn [the blind people] to be our guide. We are blind half our time, with this difference: the really blind always know what to do, while we are afraid to stir in the dark. We have lights, you say. What! always artificial aids. Who can ensure that they will always be at hand when required. I had rather Emile's eyes were in his finger tips, than in the chandler's shop. (Rousseau, *Emile* 92)

According to the myth of Oedipus, the loss of sight is perceived as punishment for an ultimate insult, a *hybris* committed, which in our case is the desire for "racial incest" between natives and Europeans. We must not forget that Atala is half European and the virginity taboo imposed by her mother is an allegory for a latent prohibition of intermarriage between people of different races and ethnicities.

Taking all these findings into consideration, we can proceed to an horizontal assessment of the aforementioned table, and note that between the heroes exists:

A. An excessive and intense proximity / devotion / relation (parental, social, interracial, ethnic)
B. Intense feelings and desires that complicate and prohibit coexistence
C. Uprooting caused by the disclosure of a secret
D. Transition to another state and death

A vertical assessment of the table, based on the structural analysis as used by Lévi-Strauss to interpret the myth of Oedipus, reveals:

1. **People linked by overrated kinship and relations** expressed through: the forbidden erotic desire between siblings (René—Amélie, Chactas—Atala, Célouta—René); Chacta's adoption by a European father and René's adoption by the Indian Chactas; the transport of the dead ancestors' bones on the back of the wandering Natchez; René's half Indian daughter christened Amelie (named after his sister); Atala's twisted dedication to God and excessive devotion to her mother; Chactas' need to return to his ancestors' land after many years of absence; Céluta's suicide following the death of her father and her husband; René's obsessed rivals in the Natchez tribe; the paternal figures of the priests Aubry and Souel
2. **Overrated desires** leading to undervalued, decreased reason and brutal voluntary or involuntary uprooting from the birthplace. The overstated passions and desires cause, as argued by Rousseau, uncertainty, deficiency and despair. "All desire implies a want, and all wants are painful; hence our wretchedness consists in the disproportion between our desires and our powers" (Rousseau, *Emile* 43). The sudden revelation of a terrible secret is connected to a taboo breaking, to a violation of a social norm which clashes with the individual's fervency and forces them to abandon their home country and the loved ones. This secret is always linked with lineage and unapproved extra-racial or inter-family relationships developed.
3. **An underrated sense of indigeneity and feeling of belonging to a certain place or community, a reduced survival capacity and impossibility of integration**. We notice a general difficulty in racial, ethnic and trans-national co-existence, causing displacement and exile in the exotic nature for René and Atala, in Europe and in the land of a rival tribe for young Chactas, in the Catholic Church for Amelie, in the unknown for the Natchez. The place of exile is a refuge that offers security, hope, and purification, while simultaneously presaging disaster, an impasse and the point of no-return to the initial condition and place. Everything in all three texts denotes a diminished capacity of survival and adaptation, leading people to a dead end, and ultimately to death.
4. **Lack of descendants—racial purity**. Isolation, exclusion and death prohibit reproduction, survival and proliferation of the nobility (the Natchez race, Atala, René, Amélie) and their descendants. Continuity is also impossible to all the people involved in a mingling of Europeans and natives.

From the detailed structural analysis above, we can conclude the existence of the following facts: An **excessive kinship,** personal, parental and social bonds, linked to **overstated feelings, decreased rationality,** and **a weak sense of community, of belonging and identification**, in America's society and exotic environment, resulting in an **end** and physical, social or symbolic **death.**

The Theme of Exile in the Literary Texts of Beaumont and Tocqueville: Between the American Fantasy and the French Eclipse

Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont leave France in 1831 and several years after Chateaubriand travel to America to study the penitentiary system of the country. This was in fact only a pretext, as their joint decision was related to Louis-Philippe's, Duke of Orleans, ascension to the throne after the July Monarchy in 1830. The Beaumont and Tocqueville families were declared supporters of the House of Bourbon and not of the House of Orleans, a preference that could possibly endanger their lives and threaten their careers. The outcome of this visit was for Beaumont the lesser-known romantic novel *Marie or Slavery in the United States* (*Marie ou l'Esclavage aux Etats-Unis*) and for Tocqueville the *Democracy in America* (*Démocratie en Amérique*) and two almost ignored romantic essay-journals, the *Visit to Lake Oneida* (*Course au Lac Oneida*) and *A Fortnight in the Desert* (*Quinze Jours au Désert*).

Beaumont's *Marie* describes the love between the French noble Ludovic, who visits America on an impulse of romantic passion and Marie, a white girl concealing her Negro ancestry. The young couple faces the outcry of public opinion, which prohibits interracial marriages, and flees in self-exile into the American natural world, to avoid violence and the prejudice caused by their union. The story unfolds through the description of Ludovic himself, who lives isolated in the American woods after the death of Marie. In the American wild, where he lives in complete solitude and isolation, he will come across a French traveler possessed by the same romantic passion that brought Ludovic himself to America many years back. Finally, having listened to Ludovic's story, the French traveler decides to return to France.

Tocqueville's *Course au lac Oneida* describes the real visit of Beaumont and Tocqueville to the Frenchman's Island in Lake Oneida, a dream of a lifetime and a phantasy. It is a tribute to the urban legend or real story (Tocqueville does not clarify) of a self-exiled French noble, who lived there with his wife and his children, isolated, trying to start afresh. There is no one left alive from the Frenchman's family and the two companions only find destroyed and used remains of a French presence, that does not exist anymore. In *Marie*, the wandering and exile refer to the heroes. In *Course au Lac Oneida*, wandering and exile refer to Beaumont and Tocqueville themselves, as well as to the imaginary/real person of the legendary French self-exiled noble.

In *Marie*, Ludovic's roving in America's wilderness evolves in two distinct phases that influence the course of the story. His first outing to a wood in Baltimore is triggered by the romantic passion and yearning for *reverie* and solitude. The internal psychological processes intensified by the perils and isolation of the wild nature peak in the romantic leitmotif of the loss of the sense of time and place in the dreamy landscape that unexpectedly ceases to be hospitable and liberating and turns into a menacing nightmare. As in the case of "Atala," salvation comes unexpectedly, through an almost metaphysical God's gift of a female that will be transformed into an object of an unfulfilled desire. The romantic hero realizes that henceforward his passion has a clear orientation and reason. His awareness of the new state of emotions will make him stray again, directed this time by higher moral principles and by the French ideals and codes of chivalry and aristocracy. The disclosure of a secret (Marie's African ancestry) will lead the hero to the second phase of self-exile.

If in the first stage Ludovic experiences a spiritual and sentimental wandering in an exotic environment, during the second stage he will make desperate efforts to transform this environment from a place for contemplation to a protective shield against social rejection and aggressiveness. Nature is perceived as a sanctuary and a refuge from racial prejudice. In order to defend Marie's life and honor, Ludovic seeks protection from the malicious effects of the "omnipotence of the majority in the United States" (Tocqueville, *Democracy* 369), strongly opposed to any kind of association between white and colored or mixed-race people. They will cross the wilderness and inaccessible deserted regions inhabited by natives, who are believed, according to the "noble savage myth" so popular in France during the eighteenth century, to remain unaffected by the corruption of civilization and live there free from

oppression and tyranny, disposing moral sense and dignity (Beaumont 141-142). At this point, de Beaumont meets Chateaubriand, Rousseau and the romantic French school. The two hunted lovers reach the Lake Oneida as well as the small Frenchman Island. Tocqueville and Beaumont had visited themselves the aforementioned island and their experience is documented in Beaumont's notes and novel, in Tocqueville's short romantic essay-journal of *Course au Lac Oneida*, and in a short passage in *Démocratie en Amérique* (420-421). In each text, the visit is described differently, depending on what the writers wish to stress.

Thus, in *Course au Lac Oneida*, written in July 1831, the most descriptive, comprehensive and emotionally charged of the three texts, we are informed that it was not a coincidental visit, but a sort of sacred pilgrimage, a "pèlerinage sentimental" (Julien 62). Some years earlier, Tocqueville had read the novel *Event at Lake Oneida* (*Erscheinungen am See Oneida*) by the German writer Sophie von La Roche, published in 1798 (Jardin 123). That book described the adventures of a French aristocrat *émigré*, who ended up along with his wife on a small, uninhabited island, in Lake Oneida after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1789:

> Many years before I had met with a book called '*Voyage au Lac Oneida.*' The author related that a young Frenchman and his wife, driven from their country by the storms of our first revolution, sought an asylum in one of the islands of the lake. There, separated from the whole world, far from the tempests of Europe and cast off by the society in which they were born, they lived for each other, and found mutual consolation in their misfortune. This book had left me a deep and lasting impression on my mind. Whether its effect on me were due to the talent of the author, to the real charm of the incidents, or to my youth, I cannot say; but the remembrance of the French couple on the Lake Oneida was never effaced from my memory. How often I had envied the peaceful joys of their solitude! Domestic bliss, the charms of conjugal union—even love—became mixed up in my mind with the image of the solitary island which my imagination had transformed into a new Eden. The story interested my companion. We often talked of it, and we every time ended by repeating, gaily or sadly—'The only happiness in this world is on the Lake Oneida.' (*Visit to Lake Oneida* 134)

For Tocqueville and Beaumont, the Frenchman's Island was a priori identified with an idealized paradise and absolute bliss: "Imagination precedes the traveler. Adventurous people, wandering in a foreign country, have a strange sensation of déjà vu ..." (Trépanier 120). According to Tocqueville's saying, the two friends intended to gather as much information as possible about their French compatriot and his family. Nonetheless, a fisherman's wife told them that although she had been living there for twenty years, she had not had the chance to actually meet the French family. She also disclosed to them, that the French woman had died there and that immediately after her death, her husband and their children had abandoned the island, known hence as "The Frenchman's Island." The two friends decided to explore the uninhabited island of Lake Oneida. Having opened with great difficulty a way through the dense vegetation, the two visitors looked for traces of the couple and the tomb of the Frenchman's wife. In the wild landscape they discovered an apple tree, a vine and under a thick layer of leaves, some remnants of kitchenware. With a "pious sentiment" (*Visit to Lake Oneida* 138) as Tocqueville himself calls it, he was looking for some sign to help him reconstruct and understand the life of these unknown people.

The couple of French aristocratic émigrés represented for him the evicted and degenerated French noble class. He laments their misfortune, the curse of having to live on away from their country, condemned in a state of self-exile despite the paradisiac, yet quite inhospitable environment. In his journal, Tocqueville wonders about what might have happened to his compatriot. He is convinced that this man could not have been able to survive either in civilization or in the desert. He compares the Frenchman's destiny with that of the proud and strong trees which are menaced by the axe of the American pioneers and the venue of civilization in the wilderness: "He is still erect, but he lives no longer"

(*Visit to Lake Oneida* 138). This phrase is an insinuation, an indirect comment for each chased and marginalized French aristocrat, who tries to retain his poise after the July Monarchy in 1830. The Frenchman of Lake Oneida represents every self-exiled French aristocrat, who fled to America to escape from the socio-political violent changes in France.

The legend of the French émigré is fictionally transferred to the short essay-journal, through which Tocqueville builds an image of an untouched, lost paradise and a twice exiled Adam. Nonetheless, this is not an aspect shared by Beaumont. His hero, Ludovic, who seeks a safe place for his beloved in order to protect her from the uncontrollable rage of the American society that prohibits marriage between white and colored people or between white and mixed race, will not seek shelter in Lake Oneida. The two lovers continue to head for the remote Saginaw village, the last civilized station in the American West. Beaumont in his book mentions Lake Oneida with no further reference regarding the "findings" he and Tocqueville discovered in the Frenchman's Island. He proceeds to a cursory, quick and rather indifferent description, refusing to suggest this small exotic place as a fictional refuge for his two heroes. "No," explains Ludovic, "The edges of the lake are invaded by Europeans. There are no longer hospitable Indians but American inn keepers. Those inns are for the servants and the negroes" (Beaumont 173).

Why did Beaumont reject it? In Tocqueville's text, it is clearly stated that the two friends were linked by the joint fantasy of the specific island. They had both transformed the fictional landscape into an ideal destination of their personal utopia. It had been one of their secret motives for visiting America. There are two possible reasons for this reversal. One relates to information about the true condition of the Frenchman that may be intentionally concealed by Beaumont but also by Tocqueville. The second reason points to the anxiety of the two companions and of the French nobility regarding the political reformations in their country after the July Monarchy, mirrored in the ratio of imaginary-real recounting of facts.

The reality of the life led by the Frenchman on Lake Oneida was completely different from the situation the two writers wanted to present or to believe in. This gentleman called La Croix de Wattines, arrived in America in 1791 with his wife and his two children. The family's third child was born there. Leaving the island shortly after, the family crossed to the other shore and lived in the Dutch community, until the family inherited a large fortune and returned to France. De Wattines after all, was not a political émigré, but an adventurer, who had squandered thoughtlessly his fortune (Pierson 203). The son of the German writer Sophie de la Roche, who lived in America, had met or heard of this Frenchman and on his return, he recounted the story to his mother, who then used it as subject of her book.

A Structural Analysis of the Theme of Wandering and Exile in the Texts of Beaumont and Tocqueville. Fainting Aristocracy, Failed colonialism and the Strengthening of the Bonds with France

In a cross-referenced reading and interpretation of the descriptions cited by the two friends, we realize that Tocqueville, excited by the romantic predilection of his era and eventually influenced by Chateaubriand, to whom he was a relative, distorts the truth in order to enhance the fantasy and the myth he had forged in his mind. On the other hand, Beaumont supplies a touch of indifference through literary descriptions which lack skillfulness and bring us closer to reality. Ludovic's visit to the lake is hastily and blandly mentioned in a single paragraph, without provoking any enthusiasm in the reader. If someone is not familiar with Tocqueville's essay and the extended quotation in *Démocratie en Amérique*, he may consider this small excerpt in Beaumont's novel as one more of Ludovic's frequently rambling, verbose, though indifferent, depictions. The true story of the Frenchman de Wattines and the real visit of the two companions in July 1831, are entangled, on the one hand with two fictional stories (that of Sophie von La Roche and that of Beaumont), and on the other with the two experiential testimonies of Tocqueville. The following scheme helps us picture the borders and the blending between fiction and reality. The horizontal classification represents real facts while vertical classification demonstrates the fictional ones.

		FICTION	
		Sophie's von La Roche romantic novel	
REALITY	The fallen and wasteful French aristocrat Louis de Wattines, visits America and ends up in Lake Oneida, on the Frenchman's Island by pure opportunism.		Tocqueville and Beaumont study America's institutions and mores. They visit Lake Oneida out of pure romantic fantasies and will to explore the vestiges of their compatriot's life.
		Tocqueville's romantic short essay *Course au Lac Oneida* Beaumont's anti-romantic depiction of Lake Oneida in *Marie*	

The dual relations which are formed intensify the correlation between past and present, imaginary and lived experience, wishful thinking and actuality, regrets and aspirations. Although the presentation of indisputable and tangible facts follows a linear path of consecutive actions executed in a specifically defined time, the reader feels that the visit is a Fantasy or a dream. Fantasy and reality in this particular case are so mingled, that they create what literature calls a *mise en abyme*, meaning the progress of a story within a story in a way that they are practically mirrored. The parallel recounting of the same fact results in a multiple reflection effect, projected on the surface of the mirror of the American exoticism, as shown in the following table: the elements depicted regarding the relations developed between fictional and real persons reveal the centrality of the theme of exile and its multiple connotations.

Relation between the heroes	**Reason of exile**	**Place of exile**	**The end of exile**
Fictional events			
Close friendship between Ludovic and the Nelson family. (pseudo siblings)	Romantic passion Discovery of the American democracy	City landscape	Isolation and social death
Marie's and her brother's George Negro ancestor. (siblings)	Revelation of the secret about Marie's and George's origins	City Landscape / Exoticism	Isolation and death
Parallel course of the couple Ludovic-Marie and the Indian tribes. (pseudo siblings)	Forced relocation from their home	Exoticism	Isolation and death
Couple of the self-exiled French aristocrats in America (siblings)	Collapse of nobility in France Romantic passion for America	Exoticism	Isolation and death

Revelation of Ludovic's secret to an unknown romantic French visitor	Disappointment regarding the American mores	Exoticism	Isolation and death
Unknown romantic French visitor, convinced by Ludovic's storytelling	Disappointment regarding the American mores	Exoticism	Return to France
True facts			
Couple of French opportunists, fallen aristocrats in America, (siblings)	Interest in fortune and property acquisition	Exoticism	Return to France
Close friendship, companionship and camaraderie between Beaumont and Tocqueville (pseudo siblings)	July Monarchy The will to study the American democracy	City landscape and exoticism	Return to France

The horizontal reading of the elements presented above, depicts:

A. An excessive and intense proximity / devotion / relation (parental, social, interracial, ethnic)
B. Intense desires and feelings that complicate and prohibit coexistence
C. Uprooting caused by the disclosure of a secret
D. Transition to another state and death

Reading the table vertically and based on the structural approach, we note:

1. **People linked by overrated kinship and relations** proven by:
The excessive importance attributed to Marie's extremely remote parental relationship with a colored person, which ignites riots and violence; the parallel march of the hunted couple and Indians in the wild American desert; Tocqueville's fantasy regarding the strong feelings of love and devotion between the French exiled couple; the indissoluble bonds of strong friendship and commitment between Beaumont and Tocqueville; the personal, confidential *de profundis* confession of Ludovic about his personal life to a stranger; the extremely deep effect of Ludovic's confession on the unknown romantic visitor
2. **Overrated feelings and desires** along with undervalued reason, leading to an abrupt, intentional or involuntary uprooting from the birthplace, due to romantic passion or social and political agitations. Ludovic, the unknown French visitor, de Wattines, Tocqueville and Beaumont, leave their country of their own will. On the contrary, Marie's wandering is forced and involuntary, as it is for the Indians who are systematically relocated. At the same time the revelation, or fear of revelation of a secret constitutes a motive and a reason for fleeing from home. For example, Marie's secret is related to her origin, as Beaumont and Tocqueville's to their noble bloodline and political devotion to the Bourbon House.
3. **An underrated sense of indigeneity and feeling of belonging to a certain place, or community, a reduced survival capacity and impossibility of integration.** Real or imaginary heroes pursuit of isolation in the wild nature that becomes at the same time a place of exile and asylum. Nonetheless

they can neither be assimilated, nor survive in the American desert (The Frenchman's Island, the Saginaw village, the wild woods). Therefore, the transition to another state conducts them to the edge or to death: for instance, the imaginary passage of the French couple to the lake and the island ends with the wife's death and with the family's break-up. The real passage of the French couple from Lake Oneida to France terminates the French presence in the area. Marie's and George's rejection by the American society and their passage to the sheltering, yet menacing desert concludes with Marie's and George's death and Ludovic's withdrawal from civilization; Marie's brother, George Nelson's integration to the antislavery movement and his death during anti-slavery riots in the South; the fall of the Ancient Regime, of the aristocracy codes and traditions, the unstoppable venue of democracy, the constant removals of the Indians, doomed to annihilation by the Jacksonian government.

4. **Lack of descendants—racial purity**: Exile and death exclude descendants and the continuation of the heroes' generation.

We ascertain the recurrent motifs we discerned in Chateaubriand's romantic works, such as the prevalence of **excessive kinship,** personal, parental and social bonds, linked to **overstated feelings, decreased rationality,** and **a weak sense of community, of belonging and identification**, in America's society and exotic environment, resulting in an **end** and physical, social or symbolic **death.**

Conclusions

The structural analysis discussed above regarding Chateaubriand's works, reveals that either forced or intentional exile is a constant reminiscence, a callout for return and a confirmation for the attachment and love for one's country. Leaving is only connected to afflictions and estrangement from self and social unity. The redundant elements denote the fact that although there are no political references in the three aforementioned novels of Chateaubriand, the text contains implicit political jibes and a particular political aspect regarding the historical events. The intense uncontrollable feelings, the dislocation of so many people and the disappearance of a whole tribe (the Natchez) and René, the last of the nobles, reflect the fratricide and insatiable passions of the French Revolution and the decline and disappearance of the privileged classes (Nobles-Clergy), who resented the abolition of their titles and fortune claimed by the bourgeoisie and the lower class. Through the taboo of interracial marriages, Chateaubriand obliquely denounces the misuse of the word *fraternité* (fraternity) that resulted in the violent transformation of France's class stratification, the creation of overstated and unilaterally leveling social relations, the abuse of equality and freedom and the brutal overthrow of nobles and clergy. For Chateaubriand, all these elements led to the abolishment of the French traditions and values and to the degradation of the links to the land of the fathers.

Chateaubriand deplores the fact that during the French Revolution and the Terror, the class mingling was arbitrarily encouraged or even imposed. According to the relevant bibliography, class mixture before the French Revolution had been by all means prohibited. Burke, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Tocqueville in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (*L' Ancient Régime et la Révolution*), confirm the introvert and almost "autistic" stance of the privileged aristocracy toward the other social groups in France, a position that led to the final breach not only in the nobility and the clergy, but also in the Monarchy that protected them. This is also confirmed in the *Persian Letters* (*Lettres Persanes*) by Montesquieu, who states that: "In France there are three kinds of states: the church, the sword and the robe. Each has a sovereign contempt for the other two" (97). The three classes had absolutely no contact between them.

The abolished privileges along with the massive execution of people belonging to the social elite in France, led many of them to a brutal uprooting and the search for a refuge in other countries. However,

this uprooting, the abandoning of the homeland was, for Chateaubriand, another form of death. The only place offering security and alleviation was the natural world that he found in the vast, pristine areas of America. Chateaubriand tried to reconstitute the decayed and chaste, pure nobility in the American exoticism. He also imposed the "natural" laws of prohibition and punishment of incest and the impossibility of social, cultural, religious, ethnic and racial intermixture. French people in his novel cannot mix with natives. Different classes (nobles, bourgeois, humble destitutes, but also Indians), conflicting religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, paganism) and distinct civilizations (French, American, Indian) cannot coexist. America was not the ideal place to integrate the romantics or the hunted French nobles, who along with the noble savages gradually melted away and vanished. Nor was it a place where the French immigrants, nobles or émigrés could be allowed to reproduce themselves by coupling with native people.

This is also confirmed by Tocqueville and Beaumont through their interconnected writings in which Chateaubriand's novels are almost mirrored. The story about the Frenchman's Island (real and imaginary) and the visit of the heroes (imaginary and real) are closely related to the theme of exile, the departure from Eden (old and new) as indicated by the almost destroyed apple tree that the two friends discover in the unruly and unwelcoming vegetation of the deserted island (Grudzinska 109-110). Everything denotes an imperfect paradise, an evanescent French colonization, the vanishing of French culture. In fact, what is implicitly reflected is the story of the failed colonial policy of France in America that resulted in the lack of reproduction and survival of the French nobility there, as shown symbolically through the ruins, the death of the Frenchman's wife and the disappearance of their descendants. Beaumont does not wish to seek shelter for his heroes in a doomed paradise and therefore changes their course leading them further west. Ultimately, the American desert and exoticism is proved not to be an ideal destination for the French people, but a point of departure and perpetuating exile. An exile that only stresses the importance of France.

Chateaubriand through his romantic, but in reality aristocratic novels, develops his political and social beliefs that reflect the nostalgia for the status quo under the Ancient Regime. Tocqueville and Beaumont on the other hand, are in reality not novel writers, but social and political analysts. They resort to such romantic techniques as to easily and smoothly transmit the results of their research regarding the institutions, the mores and the society in the American democracy, to a broader public of different backgrounds. Weberians before Weber, they observe, record, analyze and try to comprehend, presenting their findings explicitly, without displaying any particular literary talent. During the period these five books were written, the historic, political and social events in France led to the fall of aristocracy and of the Bourbon's royal family supporters, who were not only expelled by the newly transformed society, but also accused of abuse and tyranny. It becomes, therefore, imperative for the French surviving nobility to redefine its social identity and its geographical space, as they become a persecuted diaspora. Inasmuch as this is impossible in their country, the three writers seek refuge in the real and fictionally constructed American desert. Isolation and the ensuing social and physical death of all the heroes involved are a mere description of the French people's failure to connect with the American soil and their incapacity to integrate into the American society.

For Chateaubriand and Beaumont, the fall of the romantic hero and his loved ones is related symbolically and realistically to the degeneration of the *noble savage* and the French aristocrats. The Natchez are decimated and end up wandering from one place to another, bearing their ancestors' bones as a reminiscence and trace of their own homeland. Everything announces the failure of French colonialism in the New World. Romantic, opportunist, deported, expatriate, degraded, ambitious, it is for all impossible to take root, prosper and be reproduced. While the disgruntled romantic hero seeks a hideaway in the New Eden, he finally fails to bond mentally, physically, symbolically and substantially with his new homeland. Exile, by choice or by force, does not alienate French people from their country. On

the contrary, it strengthens even more their sense of belonging to a great and glorious France. The wandering of the romantic hero in America is an experience of disillusionment, disenchantment and demystification that leads him back to the safety of his homeland, to which he is organically attached.

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Mediating the Subjective Experience of a Troubled and Troubling World: Storytelling in Dystopian Novels by Margaret Atwood and Johanna Sinisalo

Abstract: The paper seeks to examine different forms and functions of storytelling in two selected dystopian novels, namely Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and Johanna Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun* (2016). Approaching the novels through the lens of dystopian fiction, the comparative analysis focuses on the use of language and storytelling as a form of resistance against oppression. Embedded in the very title of Margaret Atwood's most famous novel, the motif of storytelling proves to be one of the central building stones of her narrative. Offred's fragmentary, and often unreliable, tale not only provides a piercing portrait of a crude dystopian reality, it also symbolically challenges and undermines the authority of Gilead's regime. Sinisalo's Finnish weird novel also features a troubled young woman trapped in a dystopian system of government. She challenges and subverts the regime of the Eusistocratic Republic of Finland not only symbolically but also factually by secretly using and dealing the forbidden capsaicin as well as by living in disguise. Similarly to Atwood's literary work, the narrative form of Sinisalo's novel, largely defined by the protagonist's subjective and fragmentary insights, provides a puzzle-like mediation of a firsthand experience of a troubled and troubling world.

Keywords: dystopian fiction, storytelling, resistance, oppression, Margaret Atwood, Johanna Sinisalo

Introduction

In his book *Language and Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu claims that language functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a potent instrument of power. Bourdieu states that "although it is legitimate to treat social relations—even relations of domination—as symbolic interactions, that is, as relations of communication implying cognition and recognition, one must not forget that the relations of communication *par excellence*—linguistic exchanges—are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized" (37). Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that language exists "on the borderline between oneself and the other" (278). In order to make a word one's one, the speaker has to populate it "with his own intention, his own accent," he needs to appropriate the word, "adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (278). In other words, language cannot be regarded as a neutral medium as it necessarily implies a certain ideology or system of belief.

Dystopian Fiction and the Freedom of Speech

Therefore, control, manipulation or even suppression of language in totalitarian societies represents a relatively frequent motif in modern dystopian novels. George Orwell's legendary dystopia *1984* presents a society which gradually reduces language to minimal vocabulary in order to achieve absolute control of Oceania's citizens and avoid rebellious acts and thoughts of the population that might bring about the collapse of the totalitarian regime. One can ask, together with David W. Sisk, "By controlling language, can a speaker also control the thoughts of others who speak that language?" (1). The members of Oceania's Inner Party definitely subscribe to this belief. Winston Smith's diary entry, containing the unspeakable *with Big Brother!*, thus poses an imminent danger to his life. Although Winston's fatalistic vision of the future

foreshadows the closure of his own quest for social transformation and rejuvenation, he nonetheless cannot resist the urge to articulate his personal stance towards the system, albeit in a seemingly futile manner.

One's stance, whether spoken out loud or in a low voice or captured in written or recorded notes, waiting to be read or listened to, appears to be absolutely pivotal and fundamental for the narrative in the context of dystopian fiction in general. After all, the articulation of one's position creates the very backbone of the mediated firsthand experience of the world and the system in which the individual is incarcerated. In fact, dystopian narratives are primarily records of individual, personal stories, and are therefore built around one of the crucial binary oppositions defining the semiotic modeling of a world-image in a work of art, as described by Anton Popovič in literary context (64-80) in terms of the binary opposition "me/we—them."

The correlation between dystopian fiction and language, as indicated above by the example of Orwell's heavily language-centered *1984*, is certainly worth examining. Such a proposition is also supported by the insights of the Swedish xenolinguist Yens Wahlgren who discusses dystopian languages within the frame of his reflection of artificial languages used in fiction. Wahlgren, besides emphasizing the essential tension between utopia and dystopia (149-50) that is embedded in their derivation-polarity relationship, states that in some cases the language functions as a germane factor within dystopian novels (151). Wahlgren synoptically explores not only Orwell's newspeak, but also Anthony Burgess' nadsat (the iconic argot used by teenagers in *A Clockwork Orange*) and Suzette Haden Elgin's láadan (the feminist constructed language included in her *Native Tongue* series). Elgin's láadan and the way it is incorporated in her trilogy demonstrates the potential power of language in general, thus transcending the borders of dystopian fiction per se. As Wahlgren puts it, "the linguists use their language skills in order to change the society in a long-term outlook. They change the way of thinking via language. That is where the power of the language resides" (163-4; translated from Czech by the authors).

While numerous dystopian novels have discussed the problem of language manipulation for the purpose of control and power, this paper seeks to demonstrate how words, though intended to be suppressed and silenced, can function as a medium of resistance against oppression. As David Sisk points out, "[t]wentieth-century dystopias in English universally reveal a central emphasis on language as the primary weapon with which to resist oppression, and the corresponding desire of repressive government structures to stifle dissent by controlling language" (2). The novels demonstrate not only how language can be abused in order to maintain the present (dystopian) status quo but also how the oppressed subjects gain agency and power, though often limited or illusory, via words and storytelling.

On the Eyewitness Testimony of a Handmaid

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (as well as its recently published sequel *The Testaments*) utilizes the motif of storytelling as its fundamental premise, which, in fact, enables the mediation of the story. The development of the novel and the story of Gilead is, so to speak, dependent on Offred's voice as she is the sole intermediary of both her personal story and that of the Republic of Gilead. Consequently, in *The Testaments*, which is composed of three distinct, interconnected accounts of individual histories, it is precisely a written testimony of one of Gilead's authority figures that succeeds in bringing down the regime in the end. Atwood is clearly interested in exploring the potential of the language or, more precisely, storytelling, as an effective tool of gaining at least some control over one's life and integrity in a world that is otherwise dominated by the collective effort for a greater good.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood creates a world based on the theocratic repression of basic human rights. The Republic of Gilead, plagued by an unprecedented infertility crisis, attempts to construct a post-apocalyptic haven grounded in a clear-cut vision of social rejuvenation and strict hierarchy. Total control of its population is, among other things, also achieved by regulation and suppression of language as well

as limited access to literature and writing of any kind. Even the Bible, which, in fact, provides explanations of numerous rituals and practices incorporated into Gileadean politics and daily life is accessible only to the elite in power. Language, or words in general, therefore operate as tools of power and are used to suppress individuality, freedom and personal ambitions.

Interestingly (or ironically), while Gilead aims to silence and eradicate any personal records of its inhabitants (since they might contest the official history), the reader is acquainted with Gilead's existence and functioning precisely through a prohibited account of one of the Handmaids. In that sense, the novel directs the reader's attention to "ways of making or expressing ... history and the construction of historical versions of the real" (9). Moreover, the text ponders on "how language and narrative formats construct and confirm or question realities and interpretations by using a mixture of the modes of myth and autobiography, the formats and characteristics of official records, including academic texts" (Wisker 9). As it is obvious from the title of the novel, Offred's record of the events represents just one individual perspective on reality, one that is constantly being modified and questioned by its very creator.

While the ways in which the ruling elite of Gilead limits the individual expressions of its citizens are definitely worth inspecting, it is the voice of the oppressed that represents the primary focus of this paper. First, the protagonist uses storytelling as a coping mechanism, a survival strategy, which enables her to detach herself from the cruel reality she finds herself in. The distinct temporal frames of the novel, which uncover fragments of the pre-Gilead past and the current social order resulting from the overhaul of the former power structures, enable the reader to contextualize the abrupt transformation of the living conditions that the population had to come to terms with. Offred's plight and mental anguish are thus put into perspective as the reader gradually uncovers the story of her pre-Handmaid life. The existence, even though only imaginary, of the absent listener of her story provides the necessary comfort and escape from the isolation that the system imposes upon her. "By telling you anything at all, I'm at least believing in you, I believe you're there, I believe you into being. Because I'm telling you this story I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are" (Atwood 279).

Storytelling thus

> enables a voicing of individual experience. It is of course itself an artificial construction, a performance, a way of making sense of the world and events by shaping and sharing them and Offred's first person narrative draws us in, filled with realistic details and emotional responses but she constantly reminds us that she is shaping what happens, making it up, making it manageable, telling and retelling to make sense, influenced by the ways in which people tell stories. (Wisker 10-11)

The unreliability of her account and the constant questioning of her own story seemingly diminish the significance of her record, yet Offred's story, no matter how subjective and prone to omissions and elusions, still represents an empowering tool. "I would like to believe this is a story I'm telling. I need to believe it. I must believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance. If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it" (Atwood 49). It is through these forbidden reflections that Offred is able to retain her pre-Gilead identity, the ability to distinguish herself from the unified, depersonalized mass of Handmaids as well as her right to articulate her own opinions and thoughts.

Moreover, Offred's alternative version of reality points to the possibility of other ways of preserving, assessing and approaching the experience of Gilead citizens and thus implicitly highlights the eventuality of other subversive voices that might emerge. It reminds the reader of the potential existence of other testimonies that would oppose the oppressive silencing enforced by the regime and, as the sequel to the novel demonstrates, they might actually come even from the authorities themselves. Offred's frequent commentaries on the construction of the narrative itself also highlight "the process of constructing and representing histories, versions of events which are legitimated or re-expressed" (Wisker 21). Even by

merely implying the existence of other testimonies and different interpretation of events, Offred's narrative resists the idea of a totalitarian vision of the world.

As it was demonstrated, the novel ruminates upon the process of construction of one's personal history, which is, especially in the case of an oppressive dystopian world, inevitably embedded in the official discourse, which reflects the collective history as well. The narrative structure of *The Handmaid's Tale*, however, also subverts the existing power relations to a certain extent as it partially resides in and depends on Offred's act of rebellion and resistance against the regime. As Handmaids do not have the permission to access books and are not allowed to write either, Offred's storytelling is a conscious revolt against the present system. At the same time, however, it represents the only source of information concerning Gilead that the reader has to rely on. In other words, Gilead does not exist on the page outside of Offred's own records. Though Offred's story functions as an opposition to Gilead's oppressive narrative, her account is not explicitly challenged or negated by a pro-Gilead counter-discourse and it thus takes symbolic control of the way the reader gains knowledge about the totalitarian state (this is undermined only by the content of the subsequent Appendix).

Atwood's much-anticipated sequel to her iconic novel *The Testaments*, published in September 2019, develops the writer's concept of storytelling as a means of resistance since it follows testimonies, or testaments (hence the title) of three women who happen to be implicated in the reality of Gilead in some way. Out of these three, it is Aunt Lydia's written account that attracts most attention as it is the first time that Atwood gives voice to somebody from within Gilead, i.e. to a figure embedded in the high positions of its strict hierarchy. Her account may appear apologetic at times (reminiscent of Humbert Humbert's own confession and its problematic reception), aimed at justifying her remorseless actions. "I meant well too, I sometimes mumble silently. I meant it for the best, or for the best available, which is not the same thing. Still, think how much worse it could have been if not for me" (Atwood, *Testaments* Ch. 20). In the end, however, Aunt Lydia's testimony contributes significantly to the crumbling of Gilead.

Interestingly, Aunt Lydia's account does resemble that of Offred to the extent that she, too, seems to be in a desperate need of a reader/listener who would defy the futility of her effort. "If you are reading, this manuscript at least will have survived. Though perhaps I'm fantasizing: perhaps I will never have a reader. Perhaps I'll only be talking to the wall, in more ways than one" (Atwood, *Testaments* Ch.1). By frequently addressing the unknown reader, her recordings not only reflect her isolation instigated by the oppressive regime (which relate her to her subjects) but also humanize the so far villainous character. What is more, however, Atwood returns to her original concept of language as a medium of power; she undoubtedly regards language as the most potent tool not only to oppose but also to dismantle the monstrous totalitarian system. It is in words, which the regime attempted to suppress, that Gilead eventually meets its end.

On the Eyewitness Testimony of an Eloi

While the monstrous Gilead's regime, semiotized by Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale*, can be just barely understood as a dystopian system of government disguised as a utopian one, in the case of the Eusistocratic Republic of Finland depicted by Johanna Sinisalo in her novel *The Core of the Sun* the opposite is true. Eusistocracy, the so-called society of welfare, focuses above all on maintaining peace, general health, prosperity and overall contentment of the citizens. It is, however, going to extremes and thus pursuing a twisted enforcement of common ideals. And so, the citizens are forced to renounce everything that provides pleasure or causes addiction (alcohol, coffee, tobacco), whereby capsaicin, contained in chilli peppers, endangers the society from the point of view of the establishment in particular. As it turns out, when consumed in high enough dose it enables a dissociative trance, which can be regarded as an opportunity to escape the crude dystopian reality from "inwards." Moreover, the distortion of ideals is especially apparent in connection with sex life, since in the fictional world of the Eusistocratic Republic of

Finland the scientists have bred a new subspecies of human beings- an eloi, i. e. a woman who is, following the stern restrictions of the regime, ultra-feminine and totally submitted to men as the socially significant gender.

In *The Core of the Sun*, there are, however, two subspecies of women—eloi on one hand and the so-called morlocks, reminiscent of Atwood's unwomen, on the other. While it may seem, according to the officially declared stance of the regime, that the key to distinguishing between eloi and morlocks lies in the socially relevant and beneficial ability of reproduction (which eloi are endowed with and morlocks are not), the truth is that morlocks simply do not meet the ideological requirements of the system of government because they are independent in thinking and emancipated. Since Sinisalo's protagonist was born as morlock but raised by her grandmother as eloi, she has to accept that in the sight of the oppressive and unjust system her undesirable mind, her very self has to be incarcerated in her desirable body, her pretended self, and involuntary articulated in a lowered voice.

Similarly to *The Handmaid's Tale*, in the Eusistocratic Republic of Finland the majority of women are, albeit in a different, seemingly less culpable, manner, enslaved by a men-ruled regime. Bodies of fertile women are politicized in both novels. However, the motif of eugenics, the motif of scientific domestication of women, featured in Sinisalo's novel, affects the unlike impact of the semiotized world-image and thus the reality experienced by the oppressed in *The Core of the Sun* inevitably does not have to be even felt or realized. Therefore, only Vera's/Vanna's firsthand experience of the troubled and troubling world could be the subject-matter of Sinisalo's novel per se—namely she, not in a dissimilar manner than Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is aware and sees behind the notional curtain of the dystopian "design."

As it was demonstrated and as it is basically consensually agreed, both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Core of the Sun* can without doubt be labeled as dystopian or rather anti-utopian novels when, for instance, the authoritative entries of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Stableford, Langford) are taken into consideration. Both Atwood's and Sinisalo's works, functioning sui generis as cautionary tales interconnecting the present of the period in which they were written with the near future, are to be understood as speculative fiction. And, as P. L. Thomas (2-4) mentions in the well-known case of *The Handmaid's Tale*, it is classified as speculative fiction rather than science fiction. Furthermore, Atwood's as well as Sinisalo's literary outputs fit into the category of alternative or rather counterfactual history since they depict worlds very similar to ours yet diverted in a particular point of evolution. All of this is valid at the level of the genre-related nature of both texts despite the fact that Sinisalo is the "epitome of Finnish weird" (Niemelä 7) and her work is more than anything else a Finnish weird narrative, i.e. a model-like example of "a phenomenal mixture of SF, fantasy, horror, surrealism, magic realism—you name it" (Sinisalo, *Rare Exports* 3).

Although Sinisalo's novel evinces numerous apparent similarities to Atwood's well-recognized text, both in terms of content and its formal facet, it has a considerably polymorphous structure. Due to the switching of perspectives and textual forms, i.e. due to the chosen way of storytelling, the novel is basically constructed as an internal, puzzle-like narrative capturing a kaleidoscopic image of a troubled and troubling world. Divided, as far as the macrostructure is concerned, into two sections—*The Cellar* and *The Core of the Sun*—, the text consists of parts which are directly narrated by the female protagonist Vera (renamed by the regime's intervention to Vanna) and sections, in which Jare, the main male character and Vera/Vanna's partner, fills in the blanks of the story with his narration and recollections. Moreover, the novel also incorporates fictional entries from the contemporary Finnish dictionary ("eloi," "morlock," "eusistocracy" etc.), an interrogation protocol/transcript, fictional literary works of art and fictional non-fiction books, quotations of fictional laws and school homework of the protagonist.

Records of an Immediate Experience of a Troubled and Troubling World

However, as far as the mediation of the subjective experience of the troubled and troubling world is concerned, the most important and probably the most equivocal element of the novel's narrative are the letters which Vera/Vanna addresses to her missing sister Mira (renamed Manna by the regime). In this respect, both Atwood's and Sinisalo's literary outputs are fundamentally connected by the motif of storytelling. Yet while Vera's letters are addressed to a specific person, even a close one, Offred's recordings are, as a matter of fact, addressed only to whom it may concern, i.e. to no one in particular or, when seen from a different perspective, to practically anyone "out there." Yet since Mira/Manna is missing and presumed to be dead, the addressee is, at a more abstract level, similarly distant in both novels and the recorded testimonies thus operate within the diegetic "communiqués" only in potentia. Despite not being fully saturated in terms of the process of communication, the capturing of the subjective experience in words (spoken or written) seems to have, in case of both protagonists, a significant psycho-hygienic, purifying or even cathartic purpose:

> Dear sister! There are things that are difficult to talk about with anyone. I don't have Aulikki anymore. I have some girlfriends, but of course I can't tell them everything. Aside from you there's only one other person I can open up to who would probably listen, but he doesn´t have the same points of memory that I have, like you do. Mascos have a way of always trying to find a solution for any problem you present to them, even if all you want is to share your worries. And solutions to my problems aren't that easy to find. So I decided to write to you. You'll probably never see this letter. But I have to tell you what happened from my own point of view. (Sinisalo 12)

Regarding the chosen manner of storytelling and the very nature of the depiction of the troubled and troubling world of Sinisalo's *The Core of the Sun*, the following insights of Hanna Samola and Hanna-Riika Roine are definitely noteworthy as they argue that the subject of the main character and simultaneously the determinative novel´s narrator Vera/Vanna may significantly affect almost everything that is being read about in the novel

> The question of the main character's sister is quite interesting also due to the fact that Manna/Mira does not have a voice of her own in the text. Her thoughts and behavior are narrated by Vanna/Vera who repeatedly emphasizes the difference between the sisters […] Large parts of the novel consist of the speculation of Vanna/Vera. […] What we know about the world depicted in the novel has been filtered through the mind of Vanna/Vera, although part of the information is given by the scattered pseudo-documentary material on the pages of the novel […] The novel even gives an appearance that Manna is more of a fabulation by Vanna/Vera than a real human being […] And Jare can hardly be considered a character, his personality is virtually non-existent. Against him and Manna/Mira, the radical subjectivity of Vanna/Vera who feels herself as a different and an outsider in the society is remarkable. The reader is perhaps supposed to feel sympathy towards her and to accept her point of view. (Samola and Roine 33)

Within the frame of their consideration Samola and Roine go even so far as to question the credibility of what is uttered in the text: "The question is, what happens to interpretation if the reader does not believe in the truth told by Vanna/Vera? If anything, it eats away the reader's belief to the alternate society of Eusistocratian Finland. If we can't trust her depiction of her sister, we can hardly relate to the horrors of the domestication of women" (33). This approach, however, seems implausible, almost nonsensical. Indeed, the reader does not have to believe the protagonist's testimony. However, Vera/Vanna, similar to Offred, undoubtedly has the knowledge and, as Francis Bacon claimed, "knowledge is power" (Rodrígez García 109). In addition, although she is an unreliable though obviously an experienced narrator, Vera/Vanna, similar to Offred, has the story in her own hands. Therefore, the act of storytelling, naturally, provides her with power too. Interestingly, dystopian fictions generally discuss exactly the danger of trust

and belief put into someone with power. Yet not to trust the testimonies of Vera/Vanna and Offred seems, especially in the context of cautionary tales and dystopian narratives such as *The Handmaid´s Tale* and *The Core of the Sun*, counter-productive. After all, both stories are primarily their personal stories, mediating in the very core their subjective experience of a troubled and troubling world, and if readers want to eschew what they are being warned about, they simply have to believe them.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the protagonists of both novels offer highly personal and subjective renderings of their experience of living in a dystopian world. While the unreliability of their narratives might seemingly undermine their credibility, or validity for that matter, the conscious decision to tell one's story in one's own voice, even without the presence of an attentive listener/reader, contributes to a symbolic overhaul of power. Thus, in a world in which human beings are deprived of their identity and freedom, language and the ability to articulate one's stance towards the crude reality represents a potent tool of empowering as well as a gesture of resistance.

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PhD, Independent Scholar

"How Cool Was Will Freeman?": From the New Lad to the Postfeminist Man in *High Fidelity* and *About a Boy*

Abstract: This article aims to investigate the concept of contemporary masculinities reflected in two of Nick Hornby's novels belonging to the popular fiction genre and generally associated with the New Lad phenomenon. The novelty of the approach resides in the attempt to demonstrate that the protagonists of such novels carry with them the seeds of a transition process to the twenty-first century Postfeminist Man seeking to overcome the traumatic experiences of the past and to embrace the diversity and hybridity of the present. As a consequence, both Rob Fleming in *High Fidelity* and Will Freeman in *About a Boy* become exponents not only of the masculinity crisis at the turn of the new millennium, but also of a more flexible paradigm that allows them to acknowledge the failure of the New Lad phenomenon. When outer agents like Laura and Marcus shatter their defensive mechanisms, they can no longer cling to the self-ironical complacency and non-commitment policy of the New Lad. In other words, Rob Fleming and Will Freeman begin to reflect the image of the Postfeminist Free Man who is willing to accept the successive feminist waves and relearn the value of genuine interpersonal relationships to the detriment of a continuous obsession over the concepts of power, hierarchy and gender roles.

Keywords: contemporary English novel, popular fiction, gender roles, masculinity, New Lad, Postfeminist Man

Introduction

"Then" and "Now." These are the titles Nick Hornby chooses for the two highly asymmetrical parts of his 1995 novel *High Fidelity*. The brief introductory part practically resumes Rob Fleming's entire life up to the moment he meets his girlfriend, Laura. Henceforward, his transformation begins, giving birth to a detailed self-reflexive story that makes up the longer section of the book. An invisible barrier separates the old and new Rob Fleming, the supposedly perfect embodiment of the New Lad phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s. Could the unbalanced two parts be a mere pretext for introducing some analepses necessary to explain aspects of the story belonging to the protagonist's past or do they have another function as well? Should the readers confide in Rob's excessively self-assured monologue ascertaining his male independence and lack of any emotional attachment or should they be on alert precisely because of his unconscious desire to clearly draw a line between "before" and "now"? Most probably, his attitude is part of a much more elaborate defensive mechanism. Let us not forget that the protagonist in *About a Boy* is also haunted by a permanent necessity to provide an answer to the ever-pending question: "How cool was Will Freeman?" (Hornby 5). Both Rob and Will share the same type of social and personal defiance "jettisoning the responsibilities of patriarchy while maintaining its privileges" (Genz and Brabon 142). What follows will explore the multi-layered implications of the New Lad masculinity reflected in two of Nick Hornby's earlier novels focusing on the reasons beyond its emergence and development and its ultimate failure.

Such a reading proposes a more nuanced and, hopefully, more balanced approach to contemporary masculinities showing how the New Lad was born as a reaction against the New Man and, to a lesser degree, the Metrosexual. Since it would have been impossible for the New Lad to have a very long life, his mission seems to be foreshadowing the image and personality of the Postfeminist Man. From this perspective, Rob Fleming in *High Fidelity* and Will Freeman in *About a Boy* become representatives of a

transition process generated by the successive waves of feminist movements, in a perpetual struggle to define and distinguish among various gender roles, be them normatively ascribed or willingly assumed.

Chronologically speaking, the figure of the New Man emerged as a response to the equality demands of the first wave feminists and the consciousness-raising, identity and gender hierarchy issues brought forth by the second feminist wave. Accordingly, this new prototype addressed the main problems raised by the two feminist movements impersonating "the perceived possibility of retaining 'masculine' strength and sexual desirability, while also cultivating a 'sensitive,' 'caring' and 'emotional' side" (Gamble 259). At the same time altering and reaffirming the traditional images of men and masculinity, such a New Man borrowed a number of ostensibly long-expected characteristics: "The New Man has been described conflictingly as pro-feminist, narcissistic, anti-sexist, self-absorbed and sexually ambivalent" (Genz and Brabon 137). In a way, the New Man justifies the existence of the postfeminist movement, frequently acknowledged as a backlash reaction against the ground gained by the second wave feminism, which is ironically criticized and whose passionate desiderata are no longer fashionable or worthy of any serious consideration. On the other hand, the same postfeminist movement paradoxically brings along a pre-feminist regression overshadowing the authentic achievements of the feminist waves and justifying the exaggerations of the New Lad who "was consciously immature and anti-intellectual, preferring a lifestyle of drinking, casual sex, and 'masculine' leisure pursuits—particularly football and violence" (Knowles 569).

Forms of manifestation of a masculinity crisis, the New Man and the New Lad coexisted for a period of time in the 1990s and became exponents of mass-media enthusiasm craving for sensational, clear-cut, yet restrictive and ephemeral models. As the ideal reader of magazines like *GQ* and *Esquire* in the late 1980s, the seemingly progressive New Man was directly challenged by the New Lad, a reader of the *Loaded* magazine of the early 1990s: "With new magazines aimed at heterosexual men adopting a laddish tone and addressing 'readers as mates' (Gill 2004), chat and quiz show hosts making laddish jokes and TV sitcoms featuring older men 'behaving badly,' not only was laddism milked for entertainment but middle-class and middle-aged men were made (potential) lads" (Flood et al. 358). Although a media construct, the figure of the reactionary self-reflexive and ironical New Lad emerged due to a genuine masculinity crisis and social instability and penetrated the field of popular fiction, bringing the discourse of ordinary heterosexual middle-class white men into the limelight and contributing to the popularity of the so-called "celebrity novelists" (English and Frow) such as Nick Hornby.

Lad Lit has come to be associated with Nick Hornby's name since he played a major role not only in the promotion of the image of the New Lad, but also in its very creation. Perhaps not a mere coincidence, Hornby portrayed such a character in his autobiographic study *Fever Pitch* in which he describes football as "a male obsession" characterizing "a certain kind of male experience and psychology" (Knowles 570). On the same wavelength, *High Fidelity* "was immediately seen as a defining text for the late-twentieth-century male and also a novel that established a new genre of male relationship fiction" (570). Contentious as it may seem at first sight, Knowles' assertion contains the undisputable remarks that Hornby's novel reflects a kind of masculine typology en vogue in the 1990s and lays the foundation for a new type of popular fiction. Whether the text is indeed "defining" or not for "the late-twentieth-century male" remains to be analyzed and discussed in the following pages; the close reading of both *High Fidelity* and *About a Boy* will explore the possibility that the protagonists of these two novels truly personify the masculinity crisis at the turn of the new millennium, but reach a degree of realism that goes beyond their inclusion in the Lad Lit type of literature.

The Trajectory of the Self-Reflexive Process

In the very first lines of *High Fidelity*, Rob Fleming imaginarily addresses his former girlfriend Laura, apparently mocking her for not being able to enter his "top five most memorable split-ups" (Hornby 1). Drawing a parallel between the past and the present, Rob regretfully ponders on the superficiality of

contemporary times in comparison with those bygone days when "unhappiness really meant something" (1). Such an attitude is, in fact, the expression of a masculinity crisis generating an inevitable nostalgia for the kind of stability the gender distinctions at least created the illusion to offer: "ladlit protagonists often look to the lives and attitudes of the previous generation of men and reflect longingly on their father's secure sense of identity" (Whelehan 69).

Recalling one past relationship after another, Rob becomes obsessed with the idea that all of them are nothing but reiterations of the same failure and the same distress he felt when he was 12-13 years old and he saw his first girlfriend with another boy: "all my other romantic stories seem to be a scrambled version of that first one" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 6). While describing his second failed relationship, Rob makes a very interesting remark regarding the way in which men are perceived and portrayed by women in some of their magazines: "men—those little boys ten or twenty or thirty years on" (8). This statement becomes relevant for a sort of refuge the New Lad seeks in a perpetual adolescence, in a continuous denial of adulthood; for this reason, in Ladlit, "masculinity comes to be defined as a lack, a refusal to grow up, accept responsibility or self-determinism" (Whelehan 69). The fact that Rob is capable to self-reflexively and sometimes bitterly and ironically examine the attitude of the so-called New Lads gradually places him on a different level; it is as if he is on the way of more or less consciously acquiring some of the characteristics of the Postfeminist Man who "is more self-aware, displaying anxiety and concern for his identity while re-embracing patriarchal responsibilities which the 'new lad' defiantly threw off" (Genz and Brabon 143). Besides, the text is scattered with Rob's statements looking back on the history of gender relationships: "Women who disapprove of men—and there's plenty to disapprove of—should remember how we started out, and how far we have had to travel" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 10). Once again, he seems to be pleading for a reconsideration of the femininity-masculinity patterns and perhaps an adaptation to the heterogeneous demands of the current society.

Tackling the problem of his fear of commitment and lack of emotional stability as objectively and realistically as possible, Rob Fleming tracks down the origins of this problem up to his splitting up with the first woman he was truly in love with and his incapacity to deal with the situation; the immediate consequence was the fact that he dropped out of college and started working in a record shop, later on buying his own shop and building up a life around it. He openly admits and accepts he is an ordinary man: "What am I? Average. A middleweight. Not the brightest bloke in the world, but certainly not the dimmest" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 21). From the point of view of a Postfeminist Man, he keeps struggling to reach some balance; therefore, he can be imagined "as a chameleon figure still negotiating the ongoing impact of feminism on his identity" (Genz and Brabon 143). With this idea in the foreground, we can understand one of his preliminary remarks in the novel: "I can see what feminists are on about, most of the time, but not the radical ones" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 21).

Apart from the brief introduction, *High Fidelity* is actually Rob's account of his relationship with and separation from Laura, his current girlfriend. The question that arises is whether we should listen to Rob's warning at the beginning that this relationship was no different from the others or on the contrary, we should see it as an indication of Rob's transformation, as a new step in the direction of a new type of masculinity since the old one proved to be such a disappointment both at a personal and social level.

As the readers plunge into the details of Rob's day-to-day existence, they inevitably become aware of his so-called "dysfunctional relationship with his closest friends with whom he shares little of importance, tending to channel social interaction through shared love of music or football and through mutual insults" (Whelehan 69). His 31-year-old friend Dick seems to have completely withdrawn in a world of illusions, any exterior intrusion being acutely felt as an abusive invasion of his privacy: "in fact,—if I were ever to confess anything of a remotely personal nature—that I had a mother and father, say, or that I'd been to school when I was younger—I reckon he'd just blush, and stammer, and ask if I'd heard the new Lemonheads album" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 32). He suffers of a sort of a self-assumed autism helping him

to maintain his apparent freedom and deepening his emotional detachment. By comparison, Rob's other friend, 33-year-old Barry is emotionally crippled too, but he conceals the emptiness in his life by rampantly pretending he is full of joie de vivre and giving vent to a ceaseless sterile peroration on paraphernalia: "He talks relentlessly, and more or less everything he says is gibberish ... his conversation is simply enumeration: if he has seen a good film, he will not describe the plot, or how it made him feel, but where it ranks in his best-of-year list, his best-of-all-time list, his best-of-decade list—he thinks and talks in tens and fives, and as a consequence Dick and I do too" (34). Their obsession to classify things and even personal relationships is another symptom of their emotional imbalance and their more or less conscious search of stability and coherence.

As an inherent part of the patriarchal system, marriage would be the natural outcome of a mature relationship; yet, this does not happen with the New Lads who seem incapable of any steady commitment as Rob's mother gloomily reproaches him: "I don't know what does happen now. Apart from you meet someone, you move in together, she goes. You meet someone, you move in together, she goes" (41). She rightfully refers to an endless chain of sentimental disillusions, scarring and traumatizing for the belated adolescent who should have stepped into adulthood a long time ago. With respect to this particular aspect, the novel has been analyzed as "a tale of concluding an extended period of postadolescence," "a type of Buildungsroman" (Hurley 123). If at the start of the novel Rob remembers his ex-girlfriend Charlie as an ideal woman, in the course of the novel he contacts her again and his entire perception changes to the extent that he himself wonders: "How had I managed to edit all this out in the intervening years?" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 152). The message this "shift in metalanguage" sends is that "despite himself, Rob has grown up and is no longer as easily impressed as he used to be" (Hodson 157). The maturing process itself takes time and the readers will follow Rob frantically, attempting to hold on to his New Lad status; for example, he keeps arranging and rearranging his record collection, such an activity being transposed into "a public display of power and knowledge, serving as a form of cultural capital within the peer group" (Shuker 35). The collecting need appears in times of great stress and "provides a private refuge from the wider world and the immediate domestic environment" (188). Viewed on a larger scale, Rob's keen efforts of reorganizing his record collection "serve as a substitute for more grandiose and heroic feats of symbolic meaning-making", temporarily deferring "the impending trauma of impotence and castration thrust upon him by an act of powerful female self-assertion" (Lea and Schoene 14).

Rob and his friends' alienation reflects the alienation of at least a large group, if not of an entire generation; recovering after his break-up with Laura, Rob goes out to a pub with Dick and Barry and sadly notices: "there are a lot of single men here—not single as in unmarried, but single as in no friends" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 48). Under such circumstances, Rob—"morose and monosyllabic", Dick—"nervy and shy," and Barry "solicitously self-censoring" (48) are perhaps too harshly, yet fairly described as "tragic casualties of a not-yet-quite-post-patriarchal age" (Lea and Schoene 13).

Usually ascribed to the femininity paradigm, any outward display of an interior emotional collapse has been disregarded and considered degrading when applicable to the masculine paradigm; this is the reason why Rob pretends that nothing changes for him after his separation from Laura, that his routines and daily life are not affected in any way. Nevertheless, it does not take long for him to succumb to his real feelings: "to my intense irritation and embarrassment, I'm in tears, and the feel-nothing world that I've been living in for the last few days has vanished" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 48). The New Lad finally acknowledges that he is passing through a crisis: "I'm very good at the past. It's the present I can't understand" (66).

Rememorating his relationship with Laura with the aim of identifying the reasons for their separation, Rob notices Laura's transformation from a girl who worked for a legal aid firm, used to go clubbing and wear black leather motorcycle jackets to a successful lawyer paid forty-five thousand a year, more intense about work, wearing expensive suits and displaying "a previously unrevealed taste for weary sarcasm" (70). Her success poses a threat to his masculinity. In trying to re-assert it, Rob has an affair with somebody

else while she is pregnant, thus forcing her to resort to abortion; furthermore, soon after these incidents, he borrows a large sum of money from her and, as if all these were not enough, he tells her he is unhappy in their relationship and he is thinking of finding somebody else. By resorting to such a behavior, Rob rejects the idea of both financial and emotional dependence, openly defying the achievements of any previous feminist movement fighting for equal rights and treatment. The interesting aspect is that he chooses to pose as a victim for a long time until the readers discover that he is, in fact, the offender. Finally, roles are reversed with his partner becoming the oppressed element in the binary system of oppositions. Paradoxically, when Laura engages in a relationship of her own, he goes ballistic and starts calling her seven times a day harassing her with obsessive questions about her new boyfriend even if, in parallel, he sleeps with the folk/country singer and songwriter, Marie LaSalle. Nonetheless, sexual substitutes do not satisfy him anymore as he becomes aware of the fact that he and his friends did not manage to adapt to the reality of their times: "we got to adolescence and just stopped dead; we drew up the map then and left the boundaries exactly as they were" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 117). Although this may be true, the positive thing is that his experiences blazed the path to a new type of masculinity that would adjust to contemporary demands: "I feel like a new man, although not very much like a New Man" (87).

Rob's journey into the past starts from the necessity of adding some meaning to his relationships with the girls and women on his top five list of major split-ups; it ultimately has a recuperatory effect and contributes to his re-evaluation of both the past and the present: Alison has moved to Australia where she works as a nurse, is married and has two daughters; Penny is a BBC radio journalist with whom he goes out once and who blames him for having pressured her into having a sexual relationship when they were still very young; Jackie has married his friend Phil and they have two children and a small house and they seem perfectly happy, yet they are incredibly boring; Sarah has been forsaken by Tom and would not mind resuming her relationship with Rob, merely out of fear of remaining alone; last but not least, Charlie invites him to her place for dinner and he is put off by her fancy house and smart friends. The experience makes him no longer idolatrize Charlie as he used to; he envies her for her professional success and wishes he had not dropped out of college, but he is more willing to accept the current state of affairs.

As the story unfolds, Rob's insecurity regarding what feminism and femininity mean infiltrates his discourse about women. As an illustration, he thinks Laura's friend Liz is "OK, but, you know, she's one of those paranoid feminists who see evil in everything you say" (148). He rushes to include her in the category of radical feminists merely because she straightforwardly asks him if he hates women who have better jobs than him. Even if he seems to admire "women who talk back, with a mind of their own, women with snap and crackle and pop," he still feels much more attracted to "women who seem to need the love of a good man" (150). Here he allows himself to be enveloped into the nostalgia of the patriarchal past, becoming the male savior, the protective figure of the husband who, according to his own words, "could rescue them," "could redeem them" (150). Yet, he is conscious of the changes in contemporary society, therefore he adds: "They could make me laugh, and I could make them laugh" (150); this sounds much more like a real relationship moving beyond unilateral control and submissiveness to equality and reciprocity.

As birthdays are generally viewed as moments of retrospection and introspection, Rob is rather taken aback by the idea of behaving like a mature, responsible person; he would still like to indefinitely postpone the moment when acts of defiance and revolt are to be tempered and turned into more conciliatory gestures: "What do I want to be thirty-six for now? I don't. It's not convenient. Rob Fleming's life is frozen at the moment, and he refuses to get any older. Please retain all cards, cakes and presents for use on another occasion" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 162). Faithful to his list-like categorizations, he divides people into four typologies: "happily coupled, unhappily coupled, single and desperate" (172), but soon realizes that he would have trouble identifying those belonging to each typology. In fact, he becomes more and more aware of the hybridity and diversity characterizing society at the turn of the new millennium. He will

ultimately have to learn to show more flexibility and adaptability to the new conditions. Although Rob's transformation is inevitably due to take place, an unexpected and shocking event such as the death of Laura's father acquires the function of a catalyzer impelling Rob to act in the right direction:

> Hornby brazenly uses the psychoanalytic 'truism' that it is a fear of mortality that makes men resist monogamy and domestic stability, but pushes this further to suggest that a direct confrontation with death might also have the reverse effect. The death of Laura's father is the *deus ex machine* that brings them back together, and that eventually elicits from him a fumbling, unromantic proposal, which is appreciated, but not accepted. (Head 251)

Both Rob and Laura acknowledge their mistakes; she is ready to accept Rob into her life again, admitting in front of him that what they have done shows that not only men, but also women pass through the same kind of crisis: "Little boys and girls trapped in adult bodies and forced to get on with it" (Hornby, *High Fidelity* 191). Moving back with Rob, Laura initiates some serious dialogues by means of which she tries to convince him to shake off his complacent attitude towards life and thus to build up his self-esteem: "I'm just trying to wake you up. I'm just trying to show you that you've lived half your life, but for all you've got to show for it you might as well be nineteen, and I'm not talking about money or property or furniture" (203). She is worried about what should define her as a human being, not merely as a woman involved in a relationship; from this perspective, she is talking about personal development and pursuing and fulfilling a number of goals for the future so that she would not have the feeling that she has wasted her life: "I just want you to see that I'm not entirely defined by my relationship with you... I'm simply pointing out that what happens to us isn't the whole story. That I continue to exist even when we're not together" (205). By neither accepting nor rejecting Rob's supposedly redemptive marriage proposal, Laura teaches him another lesson; she relevantly tells him: "You work something out and everything else has to fall in line" (242). With Laura's help, Rob opens up a new club for people of their age—the new club somehow reconciles the past with the present defining a New Lad who has grown up, progressively accepting the inheritance of the past and learning to embrace the diversity and challenges of the present. He is now ready to put on the coat of the Postfeminist Man as he contentedly admits in the last sentence of the novel: "Tonight, for the first time ever, I can sort of see how it's done" (245).

The New Freeman (Re)Discovers What It Means to be Human

Hornby's novel *About a Boy* features two protagonists, casting doubt whether the title refers to 12-year-old Marcus or to 36-year-old Will Freeman, who most of the time seems much more immature than his younger friend. Alternatively focusing upon one of the two characters, the novel starts abruptly, in media res, with Marcus asking his 38-year-old mother a very perceptive question: "Have you split up now?" (Hornby, *About a Boy* 1); he refers to his mother's latest boyfriend, Roger. In spite of his mother's initial denial, his assumption proves to be true. Unlike Marcus and his mother, Will Freeman runs his life trying to be tuned in to the answers to the questions in men's magazines quizzes. Chapter 2 starts with a question that becomes emblematic for Will's laissez-faire lifestyle: "How cool was Will Freeman?" (5); he is interested in being in fashion, spending a lot of money on trendy outfits and fancy haircuts, he has no stable relationship, he knows and owns some of the latest hip-hop albums, he earns more than forty thousand pounds a year without having to work for it, and he uses light drugs as a mere form of entertainment. As a consequence, according to the quizzes, he was "dry ice… Sub-zero! You couldn't get much cooler than sub-zero!" (6). Apparently, he leads the kind of independent life his name might seem to suggest; in truth, the readers may grasp the disappointment and disillusions hidden in Will's auto-ironical remarks: "The twenty-year-old Will would have been surprised and perhaps disappointed to learn that he would reach the age of thirty-six without finding a life for himself, but the thirty-six-year-old Will wasn't particularly unhappy about it; there was less clutter this way" (7). Living-off the royalties of his

father's one-hit Christmas song, Will is still under the domination of his parent and is utterly terrified of the idea of becoming a father: "Fatherhood is the great challenge to male fecklessness and fatherhood is at the heart of Hornby's second novel *About a Boy* (1998)" (Rennison 71). In the light of his fear, he will turn down his friends' offer to be the godfather of their son; later on, willy-nilly, he will assume a father role for young Marcus.

Meanwhile, he plays the part of "Will the Good Guy," "Will the Redeemer" (Hornby, *About a Boy* 20) in front of the beautiful single mother Angie (not accidently, he meets her in the Championship Vinyl record shop owned by Rob Fleming in *High* Fidelity), realizing that "children *democratized* beautiful single women" (20) who were more likely to be impressed by a man who was willing to accept a woman with children from a previous marriage or relationship. The next step is that he invents a two-year-old son called Ned and joins SPAT (Single Parents—Alone Together), a single parents' group; he thinks that in this way his chances of meeting attractive women would considerably increase. It is due to SPAT that Will eventually meets Marcus, by means of Suzie, the best friend of Fiona, Marcus's mother; the circumstances of their first meeting are memorable since Fiona tries to commit suicide and when Will and Suzie come to drop Marcus home, they find her lying half dead on the sofa. This moment creates a bond between Marcus and Will and gradually changes both of them. As it would be expected, the experience profoundly affects Marcus for whom "this was the scariest thing he'd ever seen, by a million miles, and he knew the moment he walked in that it was something he'd have to think about forever" (58); moreover, this is the reason why he suddenly feels he has become "the oldest twelve-year-old in the world" (60). Reading his mother's suicide letter, Marcus's sense of insecurity amplifies to previously unknown levels. In his search for stability and protection, he acknowledges the importance of having a family and he starts looking for a surrogate of a father: "Two wasn't enough, that was the trouble. He'd always thought that two was a good number, and that he'd hate to live in a family of three or four or five. But he could see the point of that now: if someone dropped off the edge, you weren't left on your own" (66-7).

Bullied by the children at school and paralyzed by the fear that his mother might attempt to commit suicide again, Marcus infiltrates himself into Will's complacent existence with a candor that is both irresistible and extremely unsettling. Similarly with the way in which Will has invented an imaginary wife and son, Marcus has learnt to withdraw in a fantasy world, humming a tune and pretending everything is fine whenever he cannot cope with either the school or family reality. Although continuously denying his emotional involvement and permanently praising his non-commitment life strategy, Will finds himself inevitably moved by Marcus's sincerity and loneliness; due to Will's influence, the boy awakes to the seriousness of his problems: "Up until now he hadn't linked the days of the week in that way; each day was a bad day, but he survived by kidding himself that each day was somehow unconnected to the day before" (115). To his mother's agony, Marcus's most crushing argument in their debate over the necessity of Will's presence in the boy's life is very simply expressed: "Because I need a father" (122). More of an adolescent than Marcus, Will is not exactly the ideal father figure, but he can help the 12-year-old boy integrate among the children of his own age because he knows the kind of clothes they would wear and the kind of music they would listen to. As paradoxically as it may seem, the unreliable Will becomes a constant presence in Marcus's life unlike his unstable depressive mother Fiona or his father Clive, who takes drugs in front of his son and who is self-indulgent enough to ignore any real problems Marcus might have.

Fiona struggles to survive her own personal crisis that reflects a wider femininity crisis of the women who thought they could manage by themselves and realized that a child might need the presence of both parents: "You know, it's the first thing you think of when you split up with the father of your son, that he is going to need a man around and so on. And then good feminist common sense takes over. But ever since Marcus has been old enough to understand we've talked about it, and every time he's assured me that it doesn't matter. And then yesterday it came right out of the blue…" (130).

Giving preeminence to her psychological drama over her child's emotional problems, Fiona contributes to Marcus's alienation by behaving with him as if he were an adult and thus making him incapable of making friends of his own age. If Fiona unconsciously seeks to transform Marcus into the kind of male companion she longs for and later assumes the boy might miss a father figure in his life, Will is much closer to the truth when he gradually internalizes the idea that:

> Marcus needed help to be a kid, not an adult. And, unhappily for Will, that was exactly the kind of assistance he was qualified to provide. He wasn't able to tell Marcus how to grow up, or how to cope with a suicidal mother, or anything like that, but he could certainly tell him that Kurt Cobain didn't play for Manchester United, and for a twelve-year-old boy attending a comprehensive school at the end of 1993, that was maybe the most important information at all. (147)

Deluding himself into thinking that he is better in the cocoon he has so carefully weaved in order to protect him of any outer influence, Will suddenly loses control when it comes to his relationship with Marcus; he sees his life through the eyes of the 12-year-old boy and he does not like what he sees. Consequently, he allows Marcus to invade his privacy and he becomes more and more attached to the boy and even to Fiona for whom (to his surprise) he feels no sexual desire, but pity and sometimes anger because of the way she behaves with Marcus. The most important thing Will manages to learn is that isolation and reckless defiance of any type of norm or constraint do not represent an answer to the imperative overwhelming demands characterizing society at the end of the twentieth century. Circumstances have changed and the concept of nuclear traditional family has changed too; indeed, the narrator highlights this idea when he mentions the fact that Will "would spend Christmas in the bosom of a family—not his family, because he didn't have one, but *a* family" (156). The Christmas party reunites Will, Marcus, Fiona, Marcus's father Clive, his girlfriend Lindsey, and his girlfriend's mother; this is by no means the typical family that would be likely to gather around the Christmas tree, but it nevertheless reflects the heterogeneity and hybridity of the new social relationships. Will realizes that their common affection for Marcus allows for such a family reunion and the same affection makes them run to his rescue when the boy is arrested because of his rebellious friend Ellie: Marcus had the gift of "creating bridges wherever he went" and "it was kind of ironic that this strange and lonely child could somehow make all these connections, and yet remain so unconnected himself" (259). Paradoxically, Marcus is the only one who is not fooled by Will's pretense that he is a single father at a time when all the adults around him believed in the truthfulness of the stratagem; however, he still bestows his total confidence on Will and ardently defends him in front of anybody else: "'All he did was make up a kid for a couple of weeks. God. That's nothing. So what? Who cares? Kids at school do worse than that every day.' 'The point is, Marcus, that Will left school a long time ago. He should have grown out of making people up by now.' 'Yeah, but he's behaved better since, hasn't he?'" (170).

The 12-year-old boy makes Will feel embarrassed and ashamed with the superficiality of the life he has chosen, "a life without work and care and difficulty and detail, a life without context and texture" (171); when he meets Rachel, "an intelligent, cultured, ambitious, beautiful, witty and single woman" (171-2), he panics thinking that he has nothing to offer, that the only good thing in his life is Marcus. As a consequence, he pretends that Marcus is his son. Since he appreciates and cares about Rachel, he soon confesses her the truth and to his surprise, she is not as furious as he expected her to be; moreover, she has understood that Will and Marcus share a special relationship: "You didn't make it all up about Marcus. You're involved, and you care, and you understand him, and you worry about him..." (210). Rachel's words do not comfort Will too much since he is no longer satisfied with his lack of ambition and the emptiness of his life: "he didn't want to be defined by Marcus. He wanted his own life, and his own identity; he wanted to be interesting in his own right" (210).

Perhaps the same dissatisfaction and insecurity lead to Fiona's depression and attempt to commit suicide; the same topic will become central to Hornby's novel *A Long Way Down* featuring four characters who accidently meet on New Year's Eve with the same intention of jumping off the top of a tower-block. It appears that not only Marcus will never forget Fiona's image after she tried taking her life, but also that Will is more affected than even he is willing to admit; confronted with such a serious problem, he would normally try to ignore it and move on if it were not for Marcus because "it wasn't easy, floating on the surface of everything: it took skill and nerve, and when people told you that they were thinking of taking their own life, you could feel yourself dragged under with them" (Hornby, *About a Boy* 221). Rachel has thought about it and Will himself has thought about it and this explains why he is so afraid of a direct confrontation with Fiona; when it is finally impossible for him to avoid such a conversation between him and Marcus's mother, he will be relieved to discover that all he has to do is listen to her and show some understanding and compassion. The most important lesson that Will learns from his friendship with Marcus is that growing up means accepting both the positive and negative things life has in store for you. Once you accept the deal, you cannot continue to be a detached passive observer: "Life was, after all, like air. Will could have no doubt about that any more. There seemed to be no way of keeping it out, or at a distance, and all he could do for the moment was live it and breathe it" (256). Even if living in the society of the present means being trapped in a "messy, sprawling, chaotic web" (264), Will reaches the conclusion that "he wouldn't... mind being human on a full-time basis" (265); he "had lost his shell and his cool and his distance, and he felt scared and vulnerable", but as the narrator concludes, you have to "lose things in order to gain other things" (278).

Conclusions

Both Rob Fleming in *High Fidelity* and Will Freeman in *About a Boy* are dynamic characters whose long-term apathy is finally shattered allowing them to reconsider their entire life and their perspective upon the world. In spite of the fact that the agents of their transformation are different, the conclusions they reach are similar.

Firstly, as representatives of the New Lad phenomenon, Rob and Will have created a highly elaborate defensive mechanism against any exterior intrusion in the artificial environment they have imagined for themselves. Unfortunately or not, as any other utopian system, the protective small world in which they have chosen to withdraw was sooner or later expected to enter into disintegration. The general principle that used to govern their world was based upon emotional detachment and a clear policy of non-commitment and personal independence. In this way, they have defied social constraints and instead of following a normal evolutionary or regressive process, they have opted for stagnation. Rob and his friends insist upon classifying things and relationships as a consequence of their unconscious need to adhere to a system that would genuinely have the characteristics of a system and would not be a mere rejection of any idea of stability or continuity.

Secondly, both novels narrate the story of the collapse of a self-consciously assumed lifestyle that is to be replaced with a hopefully more functional approach fitting the frequently overwhelming demands of contemporary society. The message is that there will be no ready-made miraculous formulas ensuring personal or professional achievements, but there should be a willingness to accept change and diversity. Laura in *High Fidelity* and Marcus in *About a Boy* are the outer agents carrying out the seed of transformation. Not accidently, Rob cannot include Laura in his memorable top-five list of all-time split-ups and similarly, Will acknowledges his weakness in front of the 12-year-old Marcus with whom he strikes a more than unlikely and most unusual friendship. Escaping classification and generating confusion, Laura and Marcus are initially perceived as a threat and the characters' first reaction is to rebel against them and

to protect their environment, but once the doubt has been cast, the New Lads find themselves questioning the credibility of their thinking system and the possibility of perpetuating a sterile lifestyle.

What is more, the beauty of the novels resides in Hornby's ability to accurately describe the characteristics of the New Lad and to subtly pinpoint to the inevitable transformative process leading to the emergence of the Postfeminist Man. Dismissing the traditional father figure, the New Lad has refused to grow up for fear of ever assuming a husband or father role, yet he discovers that the social constructs as he once knew them are metamorphosing and hence they have acquired a higher degree of flexibility.

Last but not least, the Postfeminist Man puts aside the reticence and complacency of the New Lad learning to behave like an adult who has experienced the traumatic effects of the cocoon strategy and has opened his eyes to the hybridity and heterogeneity of the present. To sum up, the Free Man of the new millennium would not reject the achievements of the successive feminist waves, but would be more open-minded and less bothered with the concepts of power, hierarchy and control in favor of authentic human relationships built not only upon equality and reciprocity, but also upon the assumption that failure and success are both inherent outcomes of any specific paradigm.

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Locating Ben Okri's *The Age of Magic* in a Cosmopolitan Framework

Abstract: In this paper, I explore the implications of the term "cosmopolitanism" and focus on the critical departures Kwame Anthony Appiah's idea of "rooted cosmopolitanism" makes from the humanistic hue of cosmopolitanism. Appiah avers that cosmopolitan identities (encompassing local and global and everything in between) are based on the awareness of difference, but enabled through the desire to share narratives and stories. While Ben Okri, the Nigerian-British author has been hailed as cosmopolitan ever since *The Famished Road* (1991) was published, here I analyze his lesser discussed 2014 novel, *The Age of Magic*, and locate it in a cosmopolitan framework that is closer to Appiah's own understanding of the term. The lineage of the protagonist, Lao (to Okri's other fictional works), and of Mistletoe (to the myth of Pan), serves to instantiate the political and aesthetic imports of the cosmopolitan imagination of characters (and of the authorial figure of Okri); this cosmopolitan imagination draws with equal ease on African and European myth, magic, and cultural history. The geographical location in *The Age of Magic* also serves to exemplify an additional facet of the cosmopolitan aesthetic in question.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, *The Age of Magic*, Ben Okri, Kwame Anthony Appiah, local, global, histories

Introduction

Early in Ben Okri's *The Age of Magic* (2014), the protagonist, Lao, is in conversation with a spirit called the "Quylph" who remarks that "to be at home everywhere" in the world is indeed a fortuitous thing (10). This sentiment, though not necessarily shared or experienced by the protagonist or the other characters in the novel, sets the tone for a cosmopolitan worldview that the aesthetics, politics, and intertextuality of the novel's world invoke. In this paper, I first discuss the concept of cosmopolitanism and then the cosmopolitanism of the fictional world (and all it entails) of *The Age of Magic*. There is also, I posit, a shift in Okri's cosmopolitan imagination, as evinced through the difference between *The Famished Road* (1991) and *The Age of Magic* (2014). This paper, however, eschews a purely comparative analysis of the two novels in favor of analyzing the latter more closely.

To return to the novel at hand: the notion the Quylph posits of the individual who is "at home" anywhere and everywhere (and therefore, perhaps, also nowhere) in the world (geographically, culturally, and aesthetically, I would argue) is, by no means, an un-fractured, Romantic, or purely spiritual relationship between individual identity and the larger world. Of the several kinds of cosmopolitan figures,[3] Cyrus Patell suggests that the modern literary cosmopolitan figure (writer or character) is not someone who is necessarily comfortable everywhere; rather, it is "someone who is 'worldly' and therefore not fully comfortable—never fully at home—anywhere" (4). This discomfort is critical, for it makes the cosmopolitan figure highly aware not only of the constructed nature of their identity, but also of the

[3] Marcy Brink-Danan outlines the six kinds of the cosmopolitanisms/cosmopolitan figures as defined by Ronald Stade: spatial cosmopolitans are those who effortlessly move across the globe; social cosmopolitans do not identify with a single group or community; political cosmopolitans imagines themselves as citizens of the world; a structural understanding avers that the idea of cosmopolitanism is an elitist project that only looks down on locals; moralizing cosmopolitanism emphasizes "solidarity with strangers"; and the essentialist interpretation of cosmopolitanism projects humans as transcending social systems and classifications. (Brink-Danan 445)

connections upon which this identity rests, as well as the differences upon which their connections to the world are predicated. It could be argued that comfort and discomfort arise from the same sources and simultaneously: the juxtapositions of the local/national at the core of one's identity alongside one's earliest and abiding attachments, and the global that one necessarily partakes of in several contexts and which complicates the relationship to the local attachments. Such a dichotomy is also at the heart of much of postcolonial studies (Adorján 214).

The discomfort at the heart of the cosmopolitan identity also sets this kind of identity apart from older interpretations of cosmopolitanism.[4] The form of cosmopolitanism invoked here does not strive to disregard or un-see boundaries or be naively universalist in its approach; rather, it is what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls "rooted cosmopolitanism"—a view of the world that necessarily locates and recognizes one's "local and national attachments within a cosmopolitan framework" (qtd. in Patell 14), and the ensuing discomfort comes from acknowledging, and engaging with, difference or boundaries. Appiah also invokes a moral obligation to this cosmopolitanism, which is common to older interpretations of cosmopolitanism as well, except that there is high awareness of difference in rooted cosmopolitanism. The modern cosmopolitan figure, in other words, has a moral and social obligation to the "cosmos" or to others beyond their immediate community, while also seriously valuing the practices and beliefs of those that are significant to them (De Bruijn 172). Appiah states:

> Cosmopolitanism imagines a world in which people and novels and music and films and philosophies travel between places where they are understood differently, because people are different and welcome to their *difference*. Cosmopolitanism can work because there can be *common conversations* about these shared ideas and objects. But what makes the conversations possible is not always shared "culture"; not even, as the older humanists imagined, universal principles or values (though, as I say, people from far away can discover that their principles meet); nor yet shared understanding (though people with very different experiences can end up agreeing about the darnedest things). What works in encounters with other human beings across gaps of space, time, and experience is enormously various. For stories—epic poems as well as modern forms like novels and films, for example—it is the capacity to follow a narrative and conjure a world: and, it turns out, there are people everywhere more than willing to do this. This is the moral epistemology that makes cosmopolitanism possible. (258; *italics mine*)

Of the several concepts Appiah has carved into the idea of cosmopolitanism, three are deeply pertinent to understanding rooted cosmopolitanism as well as the novel in question: one, that activities like storytelling (and the recognition of narrative) bind humans across different sites or locations together and create a space for conversation, which is crucial to a cosmopolitanism worldview; two, that principles,

[4] Cosmopolitanism is not a twenty-first century invention, though its implications have changed over the centuries it has been in circulation; nor has this term ever been entirely free of paradoxes. As early as fourth century BCE, Diogenes had declared himself a "citizen of the world" or *cosmos* and thus the term "cosmopolitan," as opposed to a citizen of the "polis" (Patell 4, Appiah 217). The Kantian notion of a "global civil society," in the context of human rights and law, similarly equates cosmopolitanism to a universal existence:

> First is domestic law, the sphere of posited relations of right, which Kant claims should be in accordance with a republican constitution; second is the sphere of rightful relations among nations (*Voelkerrecht*), resulting from treaty obligations among states; third is cosmopolitan right, which concerns relations among civil persons to each other as well as to organized political entities in a global civil society. (Benhabib 21)

In the modern context, Benhabib explains that the notion of cosmopolitanism in international relations, human rights, and law ranges from placing the love of mankind above love of country to "hybridity, fluidity, and recognizing the fractured and internally riven character of human selves and citizens, whose complex aspirations cannot be circumscribed by national fantasies and primordial communities" to a universalist mode of moral ethics (18).

ideas, or tastes are not bound by geographical or social limits, which therefore also problematizes the question of identity determiners; and three, that there is a morality or ethics that is at the heart of cosmopolitanism, which implies cosmopolitanism is a socio-political as well as ethical attitude.

It is also important to remember that the political, humanist, "universalist" idea of cosmopolitanism (taking off from John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and John Rawls) is different from what Appiah argues literary cosmopolitanism desires to achieve. The latter derives inspiration from diaspora literature, and postcolonial as well as postmodernist theories (Patell 8). For Appiah, "the diversity of humankind is a fact" (qtd. in Patell 8) and the cosmopolitan outlook is a "*perspective* that embraces difference and promotes the bridging of cultural gaps" (qtd. in Patell 8; *italics mine*). Taking off from Appiah, Patell avers that cultures naturally tend to reinvent themselves; the natural tendency is towards mixing, miscegenation, and revision, rather than towards pristine purity (8), and the ensuing contamination is a welcome inevitability. So, in place of homogeneity or, at the other extreme, complete (and therefore, uncomplicated) identification with all, there is, instead, the acute awareness of the act of crossing and, more precisely, of the boundaries that indubitably exist. Of course, the discourse of cosmopolitanism subsumes within it the "genuine problem of belonging in a rootless world" (Adorján 192), while also reveling in the fact of difference. The tension arises as the cosmopolitan figure "tries to negotiate his/her identity at the intersection of various worlds" (De Bruijn 172). The emphasis on "various" worlds crucially extends the metaphor from a dichotomy (local/global) to a network (several interconnected factors, nodes, and modes). The way forward, Appiah claims, is through conversation and debate, and a certain striving towards not tolerance[5] of the other but the betterment (in a moral-ethical sense) of all (246). Such conversation, carried on, for instance, through literature or storytelling (which, Appiah states is common across cultural boundaries), is meant not to belittle the Other but to develop sympathy and empathy (Vermeulen 42).

Okri's Cosmopolitan Status

The objective of creating empathy through such acts as storytelling, deconstructing the self in the network of the individual-local-national-global, and the act of transcending (temporarily) stabilized identities make Ben Okri eligible for the status of a "cosmopolitan" writer. However, what cosmopolitan means in this context may vary. For instance, Brenda Cooper, in her book *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*, suggests that African writers such as Okri are cosmopolitan because they draw upon their indigenous cultural beliefs, myths, and folklore just as easily as they invoke more globally identifiable postmodernist elements in their narratives. In other words, "cosmopolitan" writers are those whose sources and ideas rely on identity formations that draw inspiration from the deliberate act of cutting across national and regional boundaries. This cosmopolitan attitude is usually adopted by writers who are "diasporic" and "dispersed" from their homelands (29, 55). It is important to recognize that in most cases, these writers are also the privileged (in terms of access to education, to travel, and to literary language) among "Third World" intellectuals (29), and of course, one cannot ignore the complications of the term "Third World" or its implications in larger imperialistic, colonialist, and economic frameworks. Nevertheless, such "cosmopolitan" writers/intellectuals have a global attitude, and feel comfortable mixing elements from native and international contexts. This does not imply that cosmopolitan (most notably also postcolonial) writers are escaping their indigenous histories/culture or denying them, as nativists have accused them of doing. Rather, they are aware that the new forces already in place, or in the process of becoming so, do not necessarily originate from an "external" source; in fact, nothing is truly

[5] It is to be noted that Appiah is strongly critical of terms like "globalization" that he finds to be historically "myopic" and far too insufficient to explain or understand the history of human interactions (216) and "multiculturalism" that acknowledges difference but staunchly refuses to make judgements on someone else's culture. For him, "cosmopolitanism" allows criticism, discourse, and a striving towards a higher form of moral truth.

external. Everything can be internalized or drawn upon with equal ease. As Cooper puts it, "Party to inherited traditions, open to global influences and skepticism," these cosmopolitan writers (magical realists, in this particular case) "offer antinomies, embrace hybrid transformations and, at the same time, wish to participate in the project of national healing" (58). This cements their location within both the local and the global, often in highly politicized ways.

Okri's inclusion in Cooper's list is for two primary reasons: first, his diasporic upbringing and the fact that he spends equal time in his country of origin, Nigeria, and his country of residence, England. This confluence of cultural heritages has ensured his imagination weaves in elements from both locations. The second reason is the politics embedded in cosmopolitan writers' art; these writers do not necessarily regard indigenous belief and knowledge systems and folklore to be paramount and superior to those of their (erstwhile) colonial counterparts. These writers are equally at home within their homelands or the lands they choose to live in or travel to, and have equal access to a global store of narratives, histories, and cultures. However, because of this vast body of knowledge available to them, they are also aware of the pitfalls of "truths." That is, when these writers and thinkers imbibe the cosmopolitan worldview, they accept the idea of diversity and miscegenation alongside the notion of "fallibilism" or the belief "that our knowledge is imperfect, provisional, subject to revision in the face of new evidence" (Appiah qtd. in Patell 9).

Cooper used Okri's Booker Prize winning *The Famished Road* (1991) as an instance of West African cosmopolitan magical realism. Esther De Bruijn also argues that *The Famished Road*'s cosmopolitan nature arises from Okri's employment of an abiku[6] child—a trope common in Yoruba mythology—as a protagonist along with indigenous belief systems such as sorcery and animism, but also mixing these with Christian and Islamic beliefs, and planting all of these in the midst of political turmoil in Nigeria in the 1970s. However, I would argue that this kind or degree of cosmopolitanism is perhaps of an earlier stage, and the cosmopolitan aesthetics and politics that come to the fore in *The Age of Magic* are significantly different, and perhaps more in tune with Appiah's call to conversation across local and national boundaries. *The Age of Magic* manages to achieve the latter aim especially because of its geographical setting and the cultural history it is, as a result, able to easily invoke. More importantly, it is the genealogy and circumstances of the protagonist of this novel that highlights a more complex form of the politics and poetics of modern literary cosmopolitanism.

The Age of Magic

Since *The Famished Road* has been labelled a product of cosmopolitan literary imagination, it is tempting to read *The Age of Magic* in the same vein, or to compare them at many a turn, though this paper avoids such a close comparison in favor of broader similarities only for the sake of an intertextual reading: both use magical realism, both lay emphasis on history and memory, and both are cosmopolitan, though different in kind. They also have a common protagonist—a quick overview of Okri's novels helps place the protagonist of *The Age of Magic* in a fruitful intertextual context. *The Famished Road* (1991), *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), and *Infinite Riches* (1998) are part of a trilogy whose protagonist is the abiku child Azaro. A host of characters like Dad, Mum, and the photographer, Nigerian politics and violence, and a palimpsest of Yoruba, Islamic, and Christian folklore as the living backdrop against which events take place, are the prominent and common features of these texts. In addition, the "weird delirium of history"

[6] The story unfolds through the first person narrative of an *abiku* child, Lazaro (or Azaro, as he is called). According to Yoruba mythology, *abiku* are spirits born in human form who die early and are reborn repeatedly. The *abiku* have the power to will their own death, and they choose to die early because they long to return to their weightless world of spirits, fauns, and fairies (*Famished Road* 4). Ironically, the happier they are in the spirit world, the sooner they are reborn to human parents. Thus, they are caught in an endless cycle of death and rebirth, a notion that is intrinsically tied to high infant mortality rates in the country. (Hawley 30)

(*The Famished Road* 195) and the intermixing of dream reality with waking reality are also common to all of them. These confused history, and crisscrossed dreaming and waking lives are carried forward in *In Arcadia* (2002), which serves as a prequel of sorts to *The Age of Magic* (2014). I would propose that Azaro of the earlier trilogy is transformed into Lao of *The Age of Magic*, and in him we find a more pronounced link between African and European histories and cultural memories, given his literary genealogy and his current embeddedness in Europe. I will return to this aspect a little later.

Characteristic of Okri's fiction, the conventional plot of *The Age of Magic* is bare; the novel's richness, rather, lies in the treatment of the moment, the incidences of "boundary skipping"[7] and the impact of time, place, history, and mythology on the characters. The novel is set in a small town of B—on the edge of Lake Lucerne (near Basel) in Switzerland. It is ostensibly one of the many stops made on a journey undertaken by a documentary film-making crew of eight members. The crew has been tasked with a quest to find Arcadia (or what they imagine it to be), and to record the journey as they go along. The pivotal point is Nicholas Poussin's famous painting with the enigmatic quote "Et in Arcadia Ego." This narrative is a continuation of the plot of *In Arcadia* wherein Lao and his team, as part of the same quest, are traversing across America. Lao is the presenter for the documentary film. The experiential and emotional encounters of the eight team members, but primarily Lao and his girlfriend, Mistletoe, with the town and its (and their own) histories, instances of magical realism, and emotional/quasi-spiritual insights form the bulk of the narrative.

As with most cosmopolitan literature, the geographical or spatial location is quite significant. In *The Age of Magic*, the Swiss town (called B—) in which the stories unfold, was, the reader is informed, once a very popular destination for the rich and famous and suffered tremendously because of this. At first glance, it appears to be of pleasantly bland simplicity and dreamlike serenity for the protagonists—quite akin to how a tourism brochure might advertise the place. It is also a town of hotels and well-appointed houses and elegant graveyards. Yet, Lao and Mistletoe expect much more from the landscape: "They had read that the mountains had given rise to legends of dragons and giants, ghosts and witches and even meerkats. Something of those legends scented the air as they wandered through the quiet streets, following their intuition" (*Age of Magic* 98-99). The tongue-in-cheek passing reference to meerkats, which are native to parts of Africa, and dragons, which are entirely fictional, in the same breath is significant: meerkats link Lao to his African roots and also poke fun at the global traveler who would reduce an entire continent to one exotic animal. The allusion to dragons alongside meerkats equates fact with fantasy, just as the desire to find meerkats in Europe equates one continent (Europe) with another (Africa).

The town of B—has had a long and vibrant history as a cultural center: the narrator claims that the place was a favorite of Goethe, Twain, Hesse, and Turner—all stalwarts of Western art and culture—as well as the more contemporary rich and famous. But, as the crew learns from Hans, the loquacious owner of the hotel where they have put up, being part of this prestigious history also led to all manner of debauchery and the ultimate ruination of the town and its people. Hans, a storyteller and historian in his own right, recalls the rich folk that participated in this history: "'They drank, they gambled away huge fortunes, they took drugs of all kinds. And there were the constant scandals. People committed suicide over failed investments, gambling debts, and women. It all became messy. The wheel of fortune turned, and everything went bad.'" He concludes that "[P]opularity, success, hysteria, killed us" (*Age of Magic* 251). After a particularly violent scandal, the rich and famous lost interest in the town and then began a phase of implosion: "[T]he town fell silent overnight. Then it died. It became a ghost town." It is only after several years that "slowly the flowers started to grow again and freshness returned to the air.'" (252). To put it differently, the town is now beginning to recover from exploitative capitalism, moral deficiency, and

[7] I borrow this term from Rawdon Wilson, who pegs this as one of the crucial features of magical realism, and this term is quite as easily applicable to *The Famished Road* as it is to *The Age of Magic*.

the weight of exoticism and high culture. It is in this phase, when the town is beginning to recover but still wishes itself erased from the annals of memory, that Lao and company arrive. The crew members' explorations of the village's landscape are crisscrossed with interruptions from other times—ghosts of people that once counted this village as their favored haunt, long ceased music festivals, a carnivalesque circus with people who have magical abilities—and also by personifications of their own fears, ambitions, and emotions that acquire a life of their own.[8] The title of the novel is significant here: was the time when the town was popular, frenzied, and coveted an age of magic? Or is it in its ruination, with its several ghosts that cross time, or lost spaces that open up to those receptive to them that the town is experiencing its age of magic? Or perhaps these are both ages of magic, but only of different imports. Indeed, Hans asserts: "Nothing here is what it seems. The town bends, changes, depending on who's looking. That's how it keeps its magic now" (253).

The motif of ghosts that rupture the patina of realism is to be pondered on: the town, once prosperous and thriving, suffered from excess and then became a ghost town (reminiscent of villages or settlements throughout history that were once on a popular circuit but then, due to economic or environmental reasons, fell by the wayside and were abandoned); literally too, it is a ghost town since Lao and Mistletoe encounter ghosts of dead people or ghostly memories of mythic pasts. The emotional landscapes of the crew members also assert themselves in the form of ghosts and spirits. In literary parlance, such "ghosts" serve as metaphors for the disruption of reality and exemplify how "reality always exceeds our capacities to describe or understand or prove" (Zamora 498). In the novel as well, they are metaphors for the liminal spaces between the tangible and mythical, the present and the past. They are signs of lost histories and memories, simultaneously existing and yet absent, and they certainly amplify the domain of "experienced reality" (500). For instance, a ghost Lao and Mistletoe meet is of a man dressed like a well-to-do banker in a car who warns them that the town is on the brink of a moral collapse (*Age of Magic* 186-88). They later see the man's tombstone marked as "Tom Woolnoth"; he had apparently died in a car accident many years ago (190). He could be interpreted as the vestige of the capitalism that ultimately ruined the town.

A significant ghost in the novel is "Malasso," an imaginary Faustian devil, who haunts the crew and who Lao believes is a "group entity"—a manifestation of the group's negative emotions coalesced into a haunting specter when they are on their quest to find paradise (Arcadia). Lao feels that it was them collectively that had "endowed him with influence, nourished his personality, enriched his agency" (*Age of Magic* 132). Malasso is an aggregate of the group's "floating dreams. Moving between two realms, he was both visible and invisible. Mirroring their blind alternation between dream and waking, thought and things, he became the master between—the master they had brought with them" (132). Further, "Unwittingly they conferred on him the power to shape their stories: he could influence whatever happened to them as they travelled through the myth-charged spaces to Arcadia" (132). Jim (the film director), however, who is most aware of the presence of Malasso, believes that the latter is not simply a group entity but "quite real" (135). Jim also obsesses about killing Malasso (139) who he believes is an impediment to the search for Arcadia (143). In other words, Malasso is both a ghost conjured up by the creative powers of the group (94) and also a metaphor for the hurdles that lie in the path of those that

[8] Several hybrid spirit forms are visible to Lao in the train carriages that bring them into the town. Lao has a vision when the train is passing through a dark tunnel: "... he saw, in a flash, a horrible spectacle. He saw imps of regret, goblins of worry, red-eyed monsters of nasty thoughts, giants of deeds done, hybrid creatures of fear, ghommids of envy, bats of guilt, cloven-hoofed figures of lust, beings of terrible aspect ... It seemed everyone's troubles had accompanied them and crowed the compartment" (*Age of Magic* 34). Further, "Lao was astonished to see his ghommids chatting with Jim's trolls, to see Jute's niebelungen gibbering with Riley's gnomes, Sam's harpies conversing with Mistletoe's sprite. They seemed to keep no secrets from one another. They talked and laughed about their owners as if the evils they knew about gave them much amusement" (41). Jim, Jute, and Riley are part of the crew.

seek paradise. The Biblical resonance of this idea, wherein the Devil tempts a true seeker, and the Faustian air of this character add to the cultural resources that the novel's imagination rests on. Moreover, this ghost is also the master of the "between," residing in liminal spaces and thus expanding the ontological comprehension of the crew members.

The connection with ghosts is also crucial to the significance of the protagonist, Lao. The ghosts in the novel are made visible to the reader via the narrator, but the focalizing points are Lao and Mistletoe. That is, the ghosts are visible to them and interact with them, giving us, the readers, an unusual insight into the past of the town, a common mythic lore of Europe, and the individual emotions of the other characters. This begs the question: why are these ghosts visible to Lao? The answer, I believe, lies in drawing a connection between Azaro of *The Famished Road* and Lao. As mentioned before, Azaro is an abiku child, and abiku are contiguous with the realms of ghosts and of the living, the waking world and the dream world. The ghosts of the past are not only visible to Lao but also unsurprising to him because he is an abiku. Azaro's real name is Lazaro, and a shortened version of it as Lao is not unimaginable. Lazaro (or Lazarus), the biblical character, symbolizes birth, death, and rebirth. As is the case with Azaro, Lao's experiences too are a cumulative effect of many worlds, many births, and many deaths: he "felt both in the present and eternal. For a moment, he was his fact and his fantasy" (*Age of Magic* 111). A mythical circularity is built into these characters and is also reflected in other symbols: for instance, Lao muses that the word "Arcadia" "began and ended with the first letter of the alphabet. Beginning with a beginning and ending with a beginning too. There was also a beginning right at its centre" (18).

The lineage from Azaro to Lao is important to understand why certain narrative choices become possible; however, it is also important to focus on how Lao is different from Azaro. Lao is truly cosmopolitan in a number of ways for several reasons. We are informed that he has travelled the world with his crew (281-82), reads extensively, and draws inspiration from texts from all cultures and regions; in effect, his imagination and understanding are shaped by numerous cultures. What Vermeulen says of Teju Cole's cosmopolitan protagonist in *Open City* is directly applicable here: Lao's imagination draws upon a "high-cultural frame of reference" (Vermeulen 40). In the novel, Lao is reading Goethe's *Faust* at the time of the story, which shapes the imaginary devil in this mold rather than those of the spirits Azaro encounters in the forest and in Madame Koto's bar in *The Famished Road*. References are made to the *Bhagavad Gita*[9] (23), Plato's ideal forms (39), Novalis (200), Velazquez (282) that make up Lao's mental landscape. He is at home with Poussin and Virgil, and dances a mix of "flamenco, salsa, and African" at a pub (229). "African" as a dance category is a nuanced hint towards Lao's citizenship, discussed later in the paper. Lao is, through such a syncretic exploration, a cosmopolitan figure, certainly far more than Azaro is.

Another remarkable feature of cosmopolitanism is that an established metaphor or symbol may be turned on its head (Patell 2). Lao's access to this kind of international "high-cultural" framework points to precisely what for centuries was inaccessible to Africans in the West (i.e. many in the West believed they were undeserving of it). Besides, he is on a quest to Arcadia, a mythological (and spiritual) Eden available only to a chosen, spiritually spotless, few. Both point to a similar politics of race and the First versus the Third World. It is also interesting that the high culture of older/classical European art and literature that played out in the town was eventually overrun by high capitalism (also a product of that part of the world) and its excesses. And perhaps most significantly, it is Lao who is the true inheritor of the town's history, for the town opens up its various layers to him (and to a slightly lesser extent, to Mistletoe).

As an abiku (and thus indubitably linked to Nigeria), Lao is able to recognize other spirit children as well, such as Nothung (perhaps a play on the word 'nothing'), a young man in the town who does not know he is a spirit child but is instantly enamored of Mistletoe (*Age of Magic* 233). Lao is surprised to find him in the "west." He imagines that "[h]e saw in his eyes the mark of one not entirely of this world, one

[9] "The Song of God"–part of the Hindo epic Mahabharata; it has 700 verses (e.n.)

who would have to make a great effort to accommodate himself to it" (235). As a cosmopolitan figure, though, Lao has equal and informed access to local legends and pan-European history and myth. *The Age of Magic* has both, the idea of a quest and a possible Eden (i.e. a pastoral utopia) as part of its endgame. Both ideas derive from European literary and art history—a fact referenced in the novel as well. The desire for Edenic origins exists in epic quests and Arthurian tales, in Biblical stories, in the idea of the noble savage, and has also served as a common response to moments of civilizational crises. Okri picks on the tradition of paradise by weaving in several prominent references to the Greek idyll as it occurs in a kind of pan-European cultural history: in Virgil's *Eclogues*, Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke*, and of course, Nicholas Poussin's famed painting. Arcadia, of ancient Greek derivation, is a symbol of pastoral beauty, oneness with nature, an Edenic wilderness, and a throwback to a time before civilization and history. Yet, the protagonist of the novel also has a Blakean vision of this Eden, recognizing that the landscape has an "inner disorder." Lao interprets Virgil's and Poussin's account thus: "Some of the dwellers in Arcadia are haunted by madness and extreme passions ... Lao often thought that maybe Virgil had intuited the power of the god Pan, or maybe that lonely shepherds in mountains are prey to obsessions" (60). Thus, not only does he have access to this heritage, he also has the space and ability to interpret and deconstruct it. The desire to find paradise, though constantly undermined by fears that it may not exist, asserts itself strongly among the characters. The crew members contrast their ideal(s) to places they actually inhabit, such as the town. The town itself believes a return to what it remembers as a previous, more paradisiacal state, is possible: after having been corrupted by capitalism and high culture, it reimagines itself in a pre-capitalist, idyllic utopian state, a reflection of the cyclic temporal schema of many an ancient myth.[10]

Yet another way in which Okri intertwines his African and European inheritances is by presenting Mistletoe and the circus folk (dancers, jugglers, acrobats) as children of Pan. These circus folk appear when Lao and Mistletoe (literally) cross a bridge over to the non-realist layer of the town's time and space and she enters "her own eternity" (*Age of Magic* 118). Pan is the Greek god of wilderness, shepherds, and rustic music (120). Though of different pedigrees, the choice to employ such characters serves a specific purpose: an abiku or the daughter of a mythological deity is the symbol of the permeability of the membrane that separates the living and the dead, the past and the present, history and myth, the tangible and the spectral. Thus, declarations like "[t]his town is merging with its dead" by Lao after he visits a graveyard (182) or "dreams infect reality with their truth" (71) or "we're in the wrong time," (189) do not sound odd. In fact, Lao and Mistletoe allow the reader to see reality with "a third eye"—one which perceives paradoxes rather than certainties ("third eye" is a term employed in a similar context by Cooper). It is of course, part of the cosmopolitan aesthetic that none of the several worlds is ever completely absent or present; rather, all are sustained contiguously and are equally valid or true. The hybrids of spirits and humans found populating the church cemetery and the music festival arena in *The Age of Magic* (as also Madame Koto's bar in *The Famished Road*) are inspired from the Yoruba belief that the orun (otherworldly, inclusive of deities, ancestors, and spirits) coexists with the aye (people, animals, and plants) (Cooper 41). This hybridism is also called "animism," and writers often "incorporate spirits, ancestors and talking

[10] Mircea Eliade, among others, outlines the cyclical time frame found in mythic rituals: archaic ontology rests on "the abolition of time through the imitation of archetypes and the repetition of paradigmatic gestures." For instance, a sacrifice not only exactly imitates and reproduces the mythical prototype, but also takes place at the "same primordial mythical moment" (35). That is, every meaningful act not only repeats the original but also coincides with it. The possibility of a return to the Ur-moment has serious implications for communal and individual memory. Eliade argues that personal memory is important only for the modern imagination wherein time moves linearly and is marked by events that take place one after another, manifested in most realist literary imagination. Mythic time, on the other hand, enables a return to the original state, and is manifested in, among other ways, the creation of archetypal figures. When Lao desires to be dissolved of his being and consumed by the universe as "holy food" (*Age of Magic* 286), he is similarly seeking to return to the primordial state.

animals, in stories ... in order to express their passions, their aesthetics and their politics" (Cooper 40)—a juxtaposition also reflected upon by Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* when analyzing the confrontation between (the Western notion of) history, which he calls a "secular" activity, and subaltern realities that often incorporate spirits, supernatural elements, and gods into their fold. Ultimately, cosmopolitan literary imaginations examine, explore, and explode such confrontations. They also allow for dialogue across realism, reality, and magic, and beg acceptability for these various experiences.

Mythological figures are not the only ones to populate the landscape; Okri also creates a trickster figure named the Quylph (mentioned at the beginning of the paper), who is only visible in oblique sight or in peripheral vision (*Age of Magic* 269). The harder Lao tries to fix the periphery, the more the Quylph shifts further out, thereby altering the limits of the periphery itself (271). Lao defines the Quylph, a legend of the area, as a "nature spirit, a guardian of treasures" (274). This creature, unlike an abikuor Pan, has no known sources of origin—except that Lao believes he has arisen from "aleph" or the beginning of language (285), thereby also implying the power of language to create all literary imagination. In this instance, as well as in Lao's ruminations on the word "Arcadia" and the invocation of several literary texts, the role of language and stories in shaping imagination and history is constantly underscored.

The narrative also highlights the paradoxes of memory, a salient element of cultural history. Although the town community appears to be one that wants neither to be visible nor known, and wishes to be erased from memory, it paradoxically must present its histories if it wishes to resurrect itself. The townspeople want to go back to the olden times, to be erased from the maps of memory and return to a point in history before they were interrupted and corrupted by the outside world. Hans states quite categorically: "We don't even want to be on the map but we can't stop it. We want to be our own secret. We want to be invisible ... We have retreated into myth" (253). Myth, clearly, is another kind of history. Ironically, of course, the overt desire to be forgotten is thwarted by the presence of a documentary film crew whose ostensible purpose is to record narratives and places and freeze them in a framework of "truth." In essence, one detects the same struggle of memory over history: it presents a community whose memories and being have not been layered by the sticky dust of forgetting but by other, more overpowering—but equally effacing—forces of capitalism, power, and glitzy culture that can severely homogenize spaces across the globe.

Modern technology—an enterprise primarily of the West—plays a vital role via the photographer and his camera in *The Famished Road*, and the trope of the camera continues in *The Age of Magic*. Of course, technology, the legacy of colonialism in several postcolonial nations, is also used to subvert the very power structures these innovations were supposed to set in place. With the camera in *The Age of Magic*, the aim is to document reality, and the camera is projected as being capable of capturing the essential personalities of the people who Lao interviews on the train. The camera, quite literally, creates history by presenting a framed and carefully arranged slice of reality and assigns to it a false sense of permanence; in other words, the camera "perpetuates a false reality" (*Age of Magic* 14). Furthermore, Lao finds it incapable of recording what he sees on the train: the spirits that saturate the compartments. Later in the novel, he comes to a startling realization that "... there is a whole world he was not seeing because he was looking; and that whole world, that vast reality, came into being when he was not looking, when he was not trying to see" (269). It is suggested that such epiphanies lead Lao to understand that there are realities rather than a reality and these are unraveled or exposed in different ways, sometimes especially if one is not deliberately seeking them. Cosmopolitanism, Robert Fine comments, breaks the limits of "essentializing particularisms" and reorients them in the context of "the inter-subjective relations in which these particulars are inserted"—a decidedly more global phenomenon (134-35). Inter-subjectivity, openness to other (or others') realities and truths, and the ability to imagine a con-fused vision are integral to the cosmopolitan figure such as Lao is.

Conclusions

The Age of Magic embodies some of the paradoxes and conflicts that are a part of cosmopolitanism and evades others. The protagonist, Lao, is an extension of Azaro (an abiku), who is traveling the world, on a Biblical quest, and draws upon a vast store of European classics that fashion his spiritual and cultural consciousness. His companion, Mistletoe, is apparently a child of Pan, another European entity. The entire tale is punctured by ghosts, histories, and memories that acquire form in the process of telling themselves to the protagonist. The destruction caused by capitalism and the dark emotional recesses of the characters' minds become personified in the form of ghosts. The destruction caused by capitalism and exoticization in a small town in Switzerland is similar to what happens in several parts of the now postcolonial world, thus bringing the two disparate locations at par. Lao and Mistletoe are the bearers of this complicated history, by virtue of their individual identities but also their global ones.

However, the novel also evades some of the complications that are inherent in the concept of cosmopolitanism. For instance, the politics of *The Famished Road* appear to be far more stark than what the dreamier and perhaps more "spiritual" (for the want of a better word) world of T*he Age of Magic* offers. Of course, such evaluations absolutely cannot, and should not, be based on whether literary texts have to perforce be political in intent or effect. However, reading politics, race, economy, class, imperialism, and aesthetics into a literary text is the prerogative of the reader. In *The Age of Magic*, for instance, it could be argued that Okri bypasses some of the conflicts of postcolonialism by situating the entire novel in what is regularly listed as one of the most expensive metropolitan areas in the world, Basel (in Switzerland), rather than in Nigeria (where *The Famished Road* and some other of Okri's writings are set) or even England (Okri's current country of residence). In other words, the very location that enables a cosmopolitan exposition also takes away from the political sting of a postcolonial setting.

The question of race is also only obliquely hinted at in *The Age of Magic*, but is, nevertheless, very crucial to a deeper understanding of cosmopolitan politics. Lao is black, and in a town of predominantly white people, he is the quintessential outsider. A pub that Lao and Mistletoe visit on their first night in the town highlights these racial tensions: the patrons of the pub turn to stare at the two, and "Lao felt the gazes returning him to the world of *colour* ..." (*Age of Magic* 102, *italics mine*). Lao is black and simultaneously partaking in European "high culture," which points to the comfort-discomfort juxtaposition in cosmopolitanism.

Okri also gently mocks another pervasive phenomenon of Europeans and Americans wanting to go to Africa as benefactors, thereby turning Africa into a perennial charity case in their imaginations. Bruno, the crew's bus driver, mentions his sincere urge to go to Africa to "help the poor and the sick" (*Age of Magic* 107). Not only is cosmopolitan history cognizant of how humans across the world have affected each other's cultural and economic identities, it is also important to highlight such instances that foreground the ethical-moral conflicts that arise in conversations among people from different local/national identities and also how the imagination of the "Other" is shaped and articulated (Appiah 222). Appiah also stresses that cosmopolitanism contains within it the desire to leave a place and the community attached to it (though one may not necessarily belong to that community in a conventional or literal sense) "better than you found it" (213, 241). Okri, through Lao, manages to succeed to some extent in this endeavor by unearthing (literarily, if not literally) the many hidden layers of history and stretching the canvas of realism (as regards both space and time) and real-time experience of a town that has suffered at the hands of high capitalism and high culture, both Western products. The buried histories of a place, when articulated, are the onset of change for the better. After all, it is only with such articulations and dialogues on race, culture, history, and economics that we can create sensitivity, connections, and appropriate contexts in which to present or imbibe them.

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Postnationalism and the Myth of England in Ondaatje's *Warlight*

Abstract: This paper argues that the effects of World War II and the debunking of the myth of England are critical themes in Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight*, a novel of formation set in post-war London in 1945. As England's notion of *Pax Britannia* dismantles, *Warlight* is a novel that undermines the very concept of nationhood in an era where the United Kingdom's fervent quest for globalization and international representation is questioned. Moreover, this paper includes an analysis of the British *bildungsroman* and reviews the commonalities and differences between the European and British novels of formation. Both the British identity and postnational identity of the adolescent protagonist, Nathaniel Williams, are scrutinized. The primary source for this study is the 2018 novel, *Warlight*, by Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan national who was educated in England and is now a Canadian citizen. Secondary sources include articles by *bildungsroman* scholars such as Tobias Boes, Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Bridget Chalk, Victoria Clarke, Mike Marais, and Franco Moretti. Sources on nationalism, postnationalism, imperialism and colonialism are used in this paper as well in order to prove the argument further.

Keywords: Ondaatje, *Warlight*, nationalism, postnationalism, colonialism, imperialism, identity

"People who enjoy waving flags don't deserve to have one."—Banksy, *Wall and Piece, 2006*

Introduction

Dating back to the eighteenth century, German authors such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Herman Hesse and Christoph Martin Wieland wrote coming-of-age stories or novels of formation and culture known as *bildungsroman*, a literary term first used by Karl Morgenstern in his lectures at the University of Dorpat between 1810 and 1820 (Swales 38). The *bildungsroman* is read and understood in the context of the German literary tradition, idealist philosophy, and nationalism, yet other nations have developed modern versions of the novel of formation within their own literary traditions. Despite the deviation from its German roots, the coming-of-age novel is widely popular in the twenty-first century. Exhibiting many of the traits of the conventional *bildungsroman*, Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight* (2018) cleverly portrays the myth of England via the post-World War II journey of the abandoned adolescent protagonist, Nathaniel Williams. The theme of postnationalism is also prevalent in Warlight, which is far different from the customary European coming-of-age novel. Tey Marianna Nunn argues, "postnational discourse takes culture, society, government, politics, and the economics of an individual nation and inserts these components into an increased regional, continental, hemispheric, and global perspective narrative" (10). Moreover, William A. Darity, Jr. claims that, "in a postnational context it becomes necessary to move beyond the idea that a homogeneous national identity is the natural integrating factor of modern political community" (397). Donald Pease's view, which is the definition that bests correlates with this paper's thesis, is that postnationalism can be defined as somewhat of a "resistance nationalism," where "the temporal dimension of the postnational sits in uneasy tension with a critical dimension that would activate a process of disengagement from the whole nationalist syndrome" (Pease qtd. in Nunn 11). This paper argues the degree to which the effects of war and the debunking of the myth of England are integral

themes in the novel of formation that is *Warlight*, an important work in Ondaatje's oeuvre where the author undermines the very concept of nationhood as an impetus towards representing globalization.

The British *Bildungsroman*

The *bildungsroman* in Great Britain became popular in the nineteenth century with novels by Charles Dickens such as *Oliver Twist* (1839), *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861). Other English authors that wrote coming-of-age tales include Jane Austen, Arnold Bennett, Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence. Franco Moretti argues that, "the vapid protagonists of the English bildungsroman reflect a more democratic and therefore presumably more modern national ethos than is manifest in continental examples of the form" (189-190). *Warlight*'s protagonist is certainly democratic; however, the novel, unlike previous English coming-of-age stories, features the imploding of the British Empire. This sheds a light on the political ideology of postnationalism in the United Kingdom. Tobias Boes argues that, "realist novels provide an imaginative space into which collective dreams and fantasies may be projected. Such projections, in turn, strengthen identity-based projects to build organic communities, such as those envisioned by the nationalist imagination" ("Beyond" 116). Although Nathaniel Williams, *Warlight*'s protagonist, grows up quickly, he never really obtains a goal of making it to the next station in life and, as an adult, seems content with being a bureaucrat. Conversely, Boes proffers that, "the *bildungsroman* always produced cosmopolitan remainders and that the logic of the genre does not serve to stabilize nationalist ideologies so much as gesture towards the possibility of world literature" (*Formative Fictions* 3). In essence, Nathaniel's journey is filled with reminders of globalization and cosmopolitanism that do not necessarily align with the ideology of the British nation-state. Moreover, the formation of the young protagonist is often far different than the perfect identity of the traditional Englishness, formed more in line with British imperialism. *Warlight* shows the post-war atmosphere of London as the British Empire begins to implode. Ondaatje uses the agency of the newly arrived immigrants in London and the metaphor of the greyhounds being smuggled into the country as strong visual representations of postnationalism in the United Kingdom. As Nathaniel bonds with the newly arrived immigrants, he sees the turning of the tide from an imperialistic Great Britain to its imploding and decolonization that leads to strong sentiments of postnationalism.

Nathaniel's British Identity

Nathaniel's sense of English nationalism and his British identity are instilled in him by his grandfather and his mother with their service to the British government. However, he never seems to embrace his legacy fully, nor does he take this opportunity to improve his station in life, as Ondaatje carefully unravels the myth of the British Empire. While the German *bildungsroman* emphasizes internal conflicts within the main character, *Warlight* uses the outside world to threaten Nathaniel's quest for identity. *Warlight* is a *bildungsroman* that uses reality, recollection, and imagination to mold and shape the moral and psychological growth of Nathaniel from his abandoned adolescence in London to adulthood in Suffolk. In this novel of social formation, Nathaniel's adolescence in *Warlight* is akin to the absent childhood of Becky Sharp in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, as both protagonists are forced to become adults at a young age. While, Becky Sharp is penniless and is determined to make her way into the world of high society, Nathaniel's ambitions are far different, if even recognizable, as he is from a solid, slightly above middle-class background.

Nathaniel's Formal Education

One aspect of Nathaniel's coming-of-age is his formal education, which begins at Dulwich College, a public boarding school in London that Michael Ondaatje attended. Nathaniel chooses, with the aid of his guardian, to discontinue being a boarder and becomes a day student who often cuts class and does poorly

in math. Nathaniel reflects on both his sister, Rachel, and him being boarders with, "we were also nervous about our escape from the school and how it would be taken by our untested guardian" (18). The English boarding school is a social apparatus created by the nation-state of England that is a stepping stone to a proper university such as Oxford or Cambridge. This is an ironic situation as most countries rely on their prestigious educational institutions to produce their best thinkers and most accomplished citizens, not those that were educated at the Criterion Banquet Halls in London. People from all over the world are willing to make sacrifices in order to attend these prestigious universities and they are an integral part of the fabric and identity of Britishness.

Post-War Technology

Another component in Nathaniel's formation in post-war Britain is technology, which is a part of Nathaniel's British identity as it has an effect on the culture, language, and identity of a country. Nathaniel discusses his father's description of the British airplane that will take him and Nathaniel's mother to Singapore from London by saying, "We stared at our father who was expanding on the details on their flight on the new Avro Tudor I, a descendant of the Lancaster bomber, which could cruise at more than three hundred miles an hour" (5). Moreover, The Darter's automobile, a blue Morris, is an example of both British technology and freedom, as Nathaniel drives it through the streets of London and proudly refers to it by saying, "I had no license, but I had a car" (90). The Morris was once an icon of the British automobile industry and the British identity. Today, only a couple of car brands are made in the United Kingdom. Agnes Street, Nathaniel and the Criterion workers use the double-decker buses, a strong symbol of British identity, in order to go around the city. Even today, Londoners are very proud of their shiny red buses and they are known globally as an icon of London.

Not all of the technology in Nathaniel's formation is related to mobility, as the imploding British Empire brought about new innovations for the needs of the government and its Commonwealth citizens. Bridget Chalk argues about the "passport effect" that "determines identity for purposes of mobility" and "was a new and major apparatus for the representation of legitimate and illegitimate categories of identity" (55). Both Nathaniel and his parents have passports in the novel, allowing them to leave England as needed, but also providing a physical reminder of their identity. Nathaniel is able to leave England and attend school in America for a brief period. During this era, the British passport is a symbol of the white British identity. Spencer proffers that until 1947, the British High Commission generally only accepted applications throughout the Commonwealth from white people, e.g. Irish citizens, while Indians and Pakistanis in the Sub-Continent were denied passports (25). These foreign experiences detract from Nathaniel's British identity and contribute to Nathaniel's cosmopolitan formation, as they give him a more global formation.

Although Nathaniel has a public-school education, once his parents abandon him to go overseas, he is left with two surrogate fathers and other cockney types who provide him with a lifetime of experiences and memories while entering manhood at an early age. Nathaniel as a parentless protagonist reinforces Ondaatje's use of memories in *Warlight*, as Tara K. Menon argued, "Nathaniel's doubt about both the veracity and the significance of his memories is underscored by a syntax and vocabulary of conjecture—many unanswered questions, recurring adjectives formed with negative prefixes (unconfirmed, incomplete, unknown) and adverbs that emphasize ambiguity (maybe, perhaps)." The painful feeling of the memories of abandonment by his parents leads to Nathaniel's feeling somewhat lost in life. His aimless attitude and his choices in authority figures and mentors find him leaning towards a strong sense of postnationalism as the unraveling of his family is analogous to the imploding of Great Britain. Essentially, Nathaniel has chosen a path that is not traditionally English and is more cosmopolitan and global.

Memories in *Warlight*

Memories are a powerful element in Ondaatje's storytelling style in *Warlight* and other works as the reader sees the novel evolve from Nathaniel's British perspective in London to one that is more global. Aarthi Vadde proffers that, "The globalist sutures collective memory to the universal category of the human, while the localist brings it back into an enclosed narrative of the nation" (267). In Ondaatje's previous works, *Running in the Family* (1982) and *The Cat's Table* (2011), he relies on the memories of his young characters to tell their story, in both the past and the present, and uses similar types of memories in *Warlight*. Ondaatje's eccentric characters often include younger people interacting with adults who guide them from their teenage past to their future as adults, a collaboration found in *Warlight* as well. Nathaniel feels abandoned by his father and holds an angry resentment towards his mother, as she lied about them going to Singapore, where his father would manage the Unilever operations there. These memories of his parents abandoning him as a teenager in London foreshadow an uncertain future for Nathaniel as he rationalizes his parents' decision by saying, "The arrangement appeared strange, but life still was haphazard and confusing during that period after the war, so what had been suggested did not feel unusual" (6). In effect, this is the beginning of Nathaniel's *bildungsroman*, which will be an extremely independent one where he will have to make many of his own decisions about his future as an adult. As his parents are representatives of the British government in the Foreign Service Office, their lying behavior is emblematic of the many lies being told to the British people by the leaders of the country during this time.

As in most first-person *bildungsromans*, Nathaniel is recollecting the story of his tumultuous adolescence as a twenty-eight-year-old adult, by sharing memories about London during the post-war blitz of the city. His memory is tragically flawed, fractured and incomplete. Nathaniel's memories with the various characters that he meets in his adolescence have an impact on his life as an adult and his choice of working in the Foreign Office. For example, Nathaniel remembers his time with Harry Nkoma, an immigrant from St. Lucia, a Commonwealth nation, who worked with Nathaniel at the Criterion Banquet Halls as, "The drawn-out careful lessons of intercourse in all its varieties, described by Mr. Nkoma, a remarkable man who had a scar on his cheek, took the whole lunch break, and I would end up washing dishes and pots for the rest of the afternoon, barely recovering from what I heard" (41). The stories of passion shared by Harry Nkoma have a significant effect on fourteen-year-old Nathaniel as he is curious about women. Part of his formation is related to sex and how it can factor into his development. Nathaniel and other young Britons are rebelling against the paternalistic repression created by Britain's patriarchal political structure.

Love in the *Bildungsroman*

Jerome Hamilton Buckley argues that "ordeal by love" is one of the characteristics of the British novel of formation (18). Traditionally, the male protagonist in the English *bildungsroman* is looking to form a relationship with a woman that is above his station in life and social class so that he can marry up. Nathaniel becomes interested in sex as he listens to Harry Nkoma telling his carnal anecdotes about his affair as a young boy with his piano teacher, Mrs. Rafferty. As part of his anti-hero formation and yearnings towards postnationalism, Nathaniel enters into a relationship with a waitress from the Criterion whom he barely knows and is certainly beneath his social station in life, as she is working class. One of the tenets of the *bildungsroman* is that romantic relationships aid in nurturing the ethical development of the character, as seen with Stephen Daedalus in Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916), whose sexual awakening solidifies his purpose in life as an artist. Patricia Alden argues that "the symbol of reconciliation is often marriage or a sexual relationship within which each partner gains a vivid sense of 'inter-relatedness' while maintaining an equally vivid sense of his individuality" (99).

One of the common supporting characters in a *bildungsroman* is known as the 'The Unrequited Love.' The relationship between Agnes Street, which is not her real name, and Nathaniel begins as a mild relationship between two co-workers that evolves into a passionate and physical one where they often make love on the hardwood floors in empty London houses. Agnes is more experienced sexually than Nathaniel, but "something else made Agnes different from others" (72). Like Paul Morel in D.H. Lawrence's *Jude the Obscure*, the initiation of sexual relations is tame in the beginning but becomes exceedingly passionate and troublesome. In one passionate passage, Nathaniel describes the intensity of their passion, "Banging into a wall. It's as if neither of us thinks of anything except to escape this closeness, and it's only closeness that will help us escape. We are on the floor kissing whatever we reach. Her hands beating my shoulders as we fuck. It isn't lovemaking" (66). Buckley argues that this "aesthetic sensibility" is often found in the *bildungsroman* hero (208). Nathaniel reflects further with, "The Agnes I knew during the summer was not the Agnes she would become later" as they are eventually separated (72). This creates a void in Nathaniel's life and differentiates him from traditional coming-of-age heroes as he has not chosen the path to marriage. Alden argues that "by making the sexual experience the avenue to true selfhood, he ignores the trauma of upward mobility; sex affords his characters a way of attaining a full experience of individuality without costly estrangement, guilt, self-betrayal, or disillusionment," making Nathaniel's sexual experiences in *Warlight* an integral part of his identity (99). As Nathaniel begins to mature, his identity is immersed more into the growing post-war sentiment of postnationalism, a prevalent theme in Ondaatje's works.

Uncertainty, Otherness, Breaking with Tradition, Lying and Postantionalism in *Warlight*

The uncertainty of nationalism during wartime London and the emergence of postnationalism can be seen in the portrayal of Nathaniel, whose evolving identity is similar to Thackeray's protagonist, Arthur, in *Pendennis* (1850), who turns his back on a powerful career in journalism in London to write *belle lettres* and poetry. Patrick Parrinder describes Arthur as, "a personification of opportunism and selfishness, not of stern ambition and a noble mission" (218). In *Warlight,* Nathaniel is not necessarily striving for a stage of completion in life but is unquestionably searching for the unknown. His journey is disrupted by a forced maturation into adulthood, which leads Nathaniel into complacency as his family life is shattered, leaving him in a broken or damaged state. Ondaatje is mirroring the fragile nation-state of England to Nathaniel's adolescence as both are damaged and are slipping into an era of postnationalism. This evolution is related to Moretti's notion that in the *bildungsroman,* "the journey is one of the most common metaphors for individual maturation" (93). As Nathaniel copes with the post-war and peacetime reconciled space of London, the relationships he has with these nefarious characters challenge societal norms and lead to his own career choice in the Foreign Office. He reflects on his abandoned adolescence, "as if we were in a time capsule of the war years when blackouts and curfews had been in effect, when there was just warlight" (81). The title *Warlight* is reflective of the blackouts and curfews that occurred after the London Blitz, where lights were dimmed to hide the city from the German bombers. However, it is also a metaphor for the secret lives of the novel's characters and their hidden agendas and checkered histories. Ondaatje uses many visual metaphors to tell the tale of Nathaniel as an abandoned adolescent who explores the curiosities that are often expressed by teenagers, despite the dysfunctional post-war landscape of London in 1945 and the house full of strangers that become his surrogate family. Ondaatje's ominous shadow imagery exacerbates the feeling of suspense and uncertainty in the novel. As London rebuilds itself in a time of peace, the traditional definition of British nationalism is beginning to reach far beyond the credo of "God, King and Country." The sun begins to set on the British Empire, hiding in the dark shadows of the warlight of London is the impetus of postnationalism. Immigrants from Commonwealth nations arrived in London after World War II seeking a better life and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the United Kingdom such as a university education and better jobs. When the Labor Party took control of

Britain in 1945, postnationalism provided many multicultural opportunities for members of the Commonwealth nations, as imperialism and the Empire became obsolete.

These circumstances are what makes *Warlight* unique as a *bildungsroman*, as the protagonist has parents who are spies, and Nathaniel chooses a career with the British Government in espionage. Another unique aspect about *Warlight*, is that the English *bildungsroman* tends to feature "provincial, lower-middle or working-class youths who aspire to develop themselves. They are distinguished from others around them by their ambition, intelligence, and sensibility" (Alden 11). Nathaniel is the opposite as he is just above middle class. He is the grandson of a British Naval Admiral, his father is an alleged international businessman, his family can afford to send both him and his sister, Rachel, to a boarding school and his family owns a three-story home in Ruvigny Gardens in London.

Otherness in *Warlight*

While Nathaniel's identity is clearly British, in the traditional sense, and his race is Caucasian, Ondaatje's *Warlight* includes characters that do not fit the traditional identity of Britishness. The acceptance of these foreign people, their customs, languages, religions and rituals is part of the emergence of postnationalism and the globalization of the United Kingdom. The inclusion of these foreign characters, particularly those at the Criterion Banquet Halls, leads to questions about what the national identity of England is and what constitutes Britishness in this post-World War II era? It appears that Nathaniel, in his struggle to obtain an identity, has begun to reject the common traits of the traditional British identity that include religion, culture, a shared history, ethnicity and language. On the basis of citizenship, Nathaniel seems to exhibit postnationalist behavior as he takes on less of an individual identity and has chosen to adhere more to a group identity. Nathaniel reflects on his time bonding with the Criterion workers with, "Why do I still remember those days and nights at the Criterion—that springtime fragment of a boy's youth, a seemingly unimportant time? The men and women I would meet at Ruvigny Gardens were more incendiary, became more significant in the path of my life" (44). Šárka Bubíková claims that the *bildungsroman* "has the inherent potential for depicting the individual's coming-of-age as interconnected with the development of a community or society. Thus, the emerging protagonist's selfhood is not only interesting in and of itself but gains importance as a representation and personification of the emergence of a particular group" (20). With Nathaniel, the workers at the Criterion are his group of peers, where they share their tales of immigration to London and Mr. Nkoma describes his sexual anecdotes as a young boy with Mrs. Rafferty on the island of Saint Lucia, which was part of the British Commonwealth. On what Nathaniel has learned from his experiences of Scratch Ball and sexual stories with the immigrants, he says, "I hid what I was learning" (45). As the immigrant workers of the Criterion are finding their way in post-war London, Nathaniel is finding his own way from adolescence into adulthood while Britain sheds its traditional exclusive identity to one that is more inclusive of people from other cultures.

For an adolescent boy that has the middle-class advantages of a public-school education, the trappings of a three-story home in London and a grandfather that was an Admiral in the British Navy, Nathaniel departs from the *status quo* with his surrogate family that is comprised of low-level criminals and spies. This is an unusual path for a teenager with a solid, traditional British identity. His education and formation in *Warlight* are urban as he is a teenager growing up in London who eventually goes to the United States to boarding school for a brief period, making his experience more cosmopolitan. Furthermore, Nathaniel's process of maturation requires discovering his talents, such as languages, and figuring out how to use them. The journey and experiences of the hero provide an opportunity to examine Nathaniel's inner self while clarifying his long-term goals and how he will pursue them. However, much like Saul Bellow's American protagonist in *Augie March*, a modern *Everyman*, Nathaniel rambles through a series of experiences that do not really lead to a clear form of identity, including greyhound smuggling, dishwashing, running a hotel elevator and getting a young girl pregnant. What kind of career do experiences like these

prepare a young man for? Nathaniel reflects on his experiences as an urban adolescent with, "When you are uncertain about which way to go as a youth, you end up sometimes as might be expected, but illegal, you find yourself easily invisible, unrecognized in the world" (98). As part of this self-discovery, summoned by illegal acts, Nathaniel gains a new perspective on his relationships with other people as he faces the complexities of adulthood. These people that Nathaniel forms life-changing relationships with during his adolescence in post-war London are critical in helping him create some form of identity. Nathaniel accepts this life of anonymity, just as the immigrant workers at the Criterion and the smuggled greyhounds with false papers do. By being anonymous and not trying to stand above others, Nathaniel is shunning his traditional British identity with his newly found anonymity. His independence is a form of rebellion against traditional organizations such as boarding schools, clubs, the church and other patriarchal societies that are representative of English society. Also, Nathaniel accepts his new world with less order and rules, as postnationalism sentiments begin to form in London and other parts of Britain while the Commonwealth implodes. Let us examine more closely how Nathaniel's British identity evolves from being reared in a nationalist setting to a more cosmopolitan and postnationalist identity.

Nathaniel's Postnational Identity

A large part of Nathaniel's postnational identity is influenced and shaped by people who are from a different part of the world that relates to traditional Britishness. Even though these people are colleagues and friends with his parents, they do not share Nathaniel's privileged upbringing and formal education. As Nathaniel has been abandoned by his parents, he is attracted to some father figures during his time in London. Norman Marshall, known as "The Pimlico Darter," or simply as "The Darter," serves as "The Kindly Teacher" to Nathaniel, a popular supporting character in the *bildungsroman.* "The Darter" is introduced as "the best welterweight north of the river," is charming and handsome, smokes cigarettes and attends sporting events at Whitechapel and Wembley, as he detests theater but enjoys cinema (18). He drives a pale blue Morris automobile and lives in "a disorganized flat at The Pelican Stairs" (56). Despite his rough façade and cockney tastes, The Darter manages to attract "highly independent women," such as Olive Lawrence, an ethnographer and geographer who has traveled to many foreign countries and speaks Aramaic, another woman who painted murals and an "argumentative Russian" (52). The Darter introduces Nathaniel to all of his female companions which allows him to be "closer to women than I had ever been, apart from my mother or sister," as he attended an all-boys school, causing him to be "intrigued by women who were outside my realm, with no blood or sexual motive" (62-63). Later, Nathaniel reveals that Olive uses her knowledge of the weather and nature to work with British Intelligence in preparation for D-Day. Nathaniel comments on Olive with, "I had benefitted from the clarity of female opinion from this person who had no close connection to me. In the brief time I knew her, I believed Olive Lawrence was on my side" (264). Olive is clearly an influence on Nathaniel and inspires him to become a part of the Foreign Office. Her cosmopolitan ways with language and travel have an effect on him and his life choices.

In addition to Olive and her adventures, The Darter's criminal activities mold and shape Nathaniel and his own future as an adult, influencing him toward a more postnationalist identity. This behavior is not very becoming of a proper Englishman with a public-school education who is conscious about his social class. Often, The Darter takes Nathaniel's sister, Rachel, and Nathaniel with him to navigate the Thames River and its many estuaries and canals with his contraband cargo. Despite growing up near the Thames, neither Rachel nor Nathaniel know anything about boats, much less smuggling illegal cargo. Nathaniel reflects, "We had not been aware of the existence of such moveable cargo, did not know of the strict laws countering the illegal importing of animals into Britain. But the Darter appeared to know everything" (76). Clearly, Nathaniel sees The Darter as both a father figure and a teacher. Moreover, The Darter is similar to Magwitch in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* as he serves as a surrogate father to Nathaniel, who could be loosely compared to Pip, and offers him an apprenticeship in a criminal activity to provide him

with a better life. Victoria Clarke proffers that, like Magwitch, "'second fathers' attempt to form their young male wards in their own or a misformed ideal image, but fail in practice. Their altruistic uses of resources as patriarchal paternal provisions are accepted in the hero's development, but ultimately not enough" (3). Looking back on his criminal activities as an adolescent with The Darter in London, Nathaniel reflects, "most of the laws I broke during that period were small" and "the illegal world felt more magical than dangerous to me" (98-99). Later, in information found in the Foreign Office archives, Nathaniel learns that The Darter was secretly transporting nitroglycerine "when there was just warlight" (265).

Nathaniel's other surrogate father figure, The Moth, whose real name is Walter, is introduced as a lodger at the Williams's home in London and becomes the guardian for Nathaniel and Rachel when their parents decide to allegedly go to Singapore for a year. The Moth is referred to by Nathaniel's parents as "a colleague" while Rachel "suspected he worked as a criminal" (6). As a supporting character in a *bildungsroman,* The Moth could be considered "The Wicked Authority Figure." Much like Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Nathaniel has another surrogate father in The Moth, who could be seen as more of a "gentlemen-maker." Another of his character's trait was that, "he spoke so disapprovingly of the advance of capitalism" (22). It could be construed that The Moth was a Socialist, possibly even a Communist. While Darter and The Moth are drawn as foils in *Warlight,* they also aid in leading Nathaniel to a more postnationalist identity. Despite the fact that The Moth and The Darter, referred to by Nathaniel's mother as "guardian owls," give Nathaniel all of the knowledge they know and share all of the skills they have, it is not enough for Nathaniel to move to a higher place in life. However, the British Government and the Foreign Office can do this for Nathaniel by way of The Silent Correction.

Many of the newly arrived immigrants in London are wearing the mask of nationalism by trying to assimilate with the culture of the United Kingdom forcing many people to be someone they are really not as they are hiding their true beliefs. Postnationalism allowed people to reveal their true selves and rid themselves of their Otherness. Nathaniel and Rachel's surrogate "family of disguises" are similar to the working-class characters found in the *bildungsroman* novels of the Victorian writer, George Gissing, who are written as "the working people of London: ignoble, depraved, ignorant beyond the help of education and, with rare exceptions, beyond redemption" (Alden 17). In *Warlight*, the Williams residence is the perfect ideal of the British family home with a garden in London and serves as a firm expression of English nationalism. With Nathaniel's father in Singapore, "the house felt more like a night zoo, with moles and jackdaws and shambling beasts who happened to be chess players, a gardener, a possible greyhound thief, a slow-moving opera singer" (46). They were an eclectic group of people who were a strange hybrid of criminals, spies and intellectuals. The Williams home was no longer an urban family villa as Nathaniel observes that "the house seemed to have collided with the outside world" (36). Nathaniel's boyhood home now became a salon for clever Cockneys, greyhound smugglers, courtiers to the royal family and other cosmopolitan and enigmatic types of Londoners. These are similar to Gissing's characters, who Alden describes as "educated proletarians or petty bourgeois who seek their fortune and/or their identity by moving among the several classes" and are classified as "schemers or idealists" (17). Many of Ondaatje's characters in *Warlight* could be labeled as either schemers or idealists, as the former are trying to survive in post-war London and the latter are looking forward to life in the newly forming Britain of foreigners and immigrants and the opportunities it will provide. The effect of these city people and urban characters on Nathaniel's cosmopolitan formation is essential to his newly formed identity of postnationalism in Britain, as they introduce him to new ways of life beyond the traditional British lifestyle. Moreover, the integration of people from many different backgrounds and the notion of inclusiveness is the foundation of the postnationalist ideology. Later in the novel, Nathaniel reflects on people like Olive Lawrence, who, based on her contributions to the war effort, was more than just an ethnographer and a geographer. He states, "There were so many like her, who were content in the modesty of their wartime skills" and feels that these silent contributors to the war were "ignored like the sea pea on those mined beaches during the

war" (284-285). In order to hide their true identities and feelings, many who supported the war effort wore disguises or a mask of sorts, e.g. The Darter and The Moth.

Masks in postmodern literature are common as many characters are without a core or are hiding something from their past or present, which leads to a fractured self or unstable identity. Nathaniel observes that, "Ours was a family with a habit for nicknames, which meant it was also a family of disguises" (6). In *Warlight,* Nathaniel's mother calls him by the nickname "Stitch" and his sister, Rachel, is known as "Wren." Ondaatje uses nicknames for his characters as they serve as a type of mask. One of the children's primary guardians is Walter, a large man known as "The Moth" for his shy demeanor, who is the third-floor lodger at the home in Ruvigny Gardens. The Moth tutors Nathaniel in mathematics, as he is failing in school, and works in a profession that is linked to "ledgers and salaries" (10-11). Rachel suspects that the Moth was a criminal and was a colleague of their mother as they were both in charge of fire watching at the Grosvenor House Hotel during the war and worked together in the "Berkshire Unit," a group of British spies that intercepted German messages from across the English Channel (12).

As Nathaniel has chosen to abandon his prestigious boarding school education experience, he has replaced it with working at the Criterion Banquet Halls with newly arrived immigrants. This serves as an extension of his fractured identity and postnational formation. The Moth "oversaw the daily work of the mostly immigrant staff" who were busy servicing the celebrations of post-War London and the upper-class folks that were funding these events (23). Until the turn of the twentieth-century, immigration into the U.K. was only formally regulated, and class rather than citizenship determined the migrant's likelihood of gaining entry. Ondaatje compares the immigrants polishing, vacuuming and whisking away in the Great Hall at the Criterion to "a train station where every passenger had a purpose" (23). This is a visual metaphor of class distinction and identity that was a part of the old definition of Britishness. At the Criterion, there are characters that have a lasting effect on Nathaniel and his cosmopolitan upbringing in London, including Harry Nkoma, a dishwasher with whom Nathaniel would "thrust fragile glasses into the rotating bristles, and tossed them a second later into boiling water" (41). When he was a young boy in St. Lucia, Nkoma played the piano and was proud of sharing his libidinal activities and sexual episodes with his piano instructor, Mrs. Rafferty. This introduction to sexual enlightenment encourages Nathaniel to explore his own sexuality as part of his leap from adolescence to adulthood. The sexual experience is an integral part of the *bildungsroman* for the male adolescent hero to experience as it can be life changing. Nkoma can be seen as a role model for Nathaniel as he inspires him to experiment with his sexual urges and manhood.

Similar to the dark and shadowy streets of post-war London, Nathaniel describes the basement laundry of the Criterion as "a grey universe, windowless, separate from any daylight" (37). This is where Nathaniel works for "pay and a half wages" and eventually becomes a "lift boy" where he mixes with "so many saints and heroes I never knew" (39). Nathaniel describes himself as "bored" and "invisible" (38). Eventually, Nathaniel becomes a dishwasher at the Criterion and meets immigrants from Poland and the Caribbean. All of these eclectic types of people that make up the social landscape of post-war London have a lasting effect on the identity of Nathaniel Williams as they make a significant impression on him as a teenager in 1945. Moreover, they are the beginning of postnationalism in post-war Great Britain as they are bringing pieces of their own culture to London. This is very broadening for Nathaniel and adds to his cosmopolitan formation. As a boy in London in the 1950's, Ondaatje's mother, Doris, worked in hotels in London to support herself and her son. Other minor characters that include Mr. Lawrence, a "verbose beekeeper ... who was under a cloud for some unspoken misdemeanor in the past" and Citronella, a former haberdasher who had worked as a spy for the government are introduced (35-36). Also, there is Arthur McCash, who "spoke French, as well as other languages" and was "quiet and modest" (101). Both Nathaniel and his mother, Rose, are adept at foreign languages, a good skill for a spy. Although the character's roles may appear to be minor or they do not engage in as much dialog as The Moth or The Darter, they do have a significant impact on Nathaniel and his coming of age in *Warlight*, as their unique

abilities and talents are an integral part of Nathaniel's education into Foreign Service and espionage. One skill that is critical to a good spy is the ability to lie well, which Nathaniel learns to master as part of his postnational formation in life.

Lying as a Theme in *Warlight*

By continuously lying, Nathaniel is pushing himself further away from being a traditional protagonist in an English *bildungsroman*. Lying is a major theme, not only in *Warlight*, but in other Ondaatje works including *Running in the Family* and *The English Patient*. In a novel filled with spies and other practitioners of espionage, lying is one of their most utilized skills, so this makes perfect sense. In *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje writes, "In Sri Lanka, a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts" (206). Moreover, in Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, Almasay and Katharine discuss lying. Katharine says, "If you make love to me I won't lie about it. If I make love to you won't lie about it." Almasay asks Katharine, "What do you hate most?" She responds with, "A lie. And you?" (152). It seems appropriate for lying to be a major theme in *Warlight,* as one of the skills required of being a good spy is to be a good liar. Most of the characters in *Warlight* are liars and are quite good at it. The novel opens with a lie when Nathaniel's parents tell both Rachel and him that they are relocating to Singapore for a year so that the father can manage the Unilever office there. Later, we learn that the mother never went to Singapore as she left her steamer trunk behind in the basement of the Ruvigny Gardens home. Eventually, Nathaniel begins to lie to his teachers at Dulwich so he can skip school and spend time on the waterways with The Darter on his boat, smuggling greyhounds and other illegal cargo. Nathaniel lies to his girlfriend, Agnes, by telling her that The Darter is his father. He reflects on this moment with, "I had become a liar not so much to confuse her as to remove the hurt she felt because I kept the inexplicable situation in my life from her—and perhaps from myself as well" (108). Years later, after Nathaniel has left London for Suffolk, he discusses The Darter's ability to tell a lie:

> What led me to understand what had taken place in his flat was remembering what a great liar The Darter was. How, when surprised by a policeman or security guard at a warehouse or museum, he would improvise an unplanned lie that was so intricate and even so ridiculous that he would be laughing at it himself. People did not usually lie and find it funny at the same time that was his disguise. "Never plan a lie," he told me during one of those night journeys. "Invent as you go along. It's more believable." (*273*)

Since Nathaniel is a postmodern protagonist, he goes against the grain of the traditional hero found in a *bildungsroman* by lying throughout the novel. In a conversation with Agnes Street, she asks Nathaniel about his sexual past and says, "You can tell me in French if you want?" Nathaniel tells her, "'I failed French,' I lie" (71-72). There is continual lying all throughout the novel and it seems to be a part of both the urban culture of post-war London and the culture of British espionage. The biggest lie is that of the power of the British Empire that occurred after World War II ended. England's deception of its colonial nations such as Ireland, India and Egypt under the guise of Pax Britannia began to unfold as the British Empire began to implode and Russian spies were suspected of infiltrating Whitehall and the Cabinet. It is the beginning of the Cold War as the Commonwealth collapses and relies heavily on financial support from America.

Postnationalism in *Warlight*

Such qualities of internationalism and globalization are not new for Ondaatje, and indeed the theme of postnationalism surfaces in many of Ondaatje's novels and non-fiction works. Ondaatje, a Canadian citizen who was born in Sri Lanka, comes from a multi-ethnic background that includes Dutch, Sinhalese, and Tamil ancestry. Milica Živković elaborates with, "It is both this intricate maze of social affiliations charged with the colonial mythos and his family history which is equally laden with the fictions and mythical elaborations of memory that Ondaatje tries to disentangle" (105). Because he is of mixed

nationalities, Ondaatje often reflects on these different ethnicities in his books. Vadde contends that Ondaatje's novels "are able to dissect the stories that nations tell to define themselves not just as communities evolving over time but as communities that derive character, shape and purpose from a particular understanding and performance of their origins" (259). Farhana Haque contends that in Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, "The unreliable nature of desert symbolized the unreliable national identities, which was shattered and isolated because of the traumatic conditions of the characters in the unknown landscape and different culture" (1950). In *Warlight*, many of the immigrant workers at the Criterion Banquet Halls, including Harry Nkoma, have "unreliable national identities" similar to those in *The English Patient.* As exiles, the characters in *The English Patient* hail from England, Canada and Hungary with mixed ethnicities as Anglo-Indian and Canadian-Italian. The omniscient narrator in the novel comments on nationalism by saying, "We were German, English, Hungarian, African—all of us insignificant to them. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states. Madox died because of nations" (*The English Patient* 138). Count Almasy, a Hungarian cartographer, is beyond ownership and does not recognize any nation or nationality. Mike Marais contends that in *The English Patient*, "We have come to realize that national identity—whether it be English or Hungarian—is quite simply beside the point, that Almasy exceeds, is more than, that which such tropes of identity denote. Having been privy to this story, we know that he has moved beyond national boundaries that he, like the desert with which he is metaphorically associated, is impervious to names" (106).

John Carlos Rowe argues that postnationalism "calls attention to the negative heritage of colonial or national practices" and that "colonialism and nationalism has disappeared (or will shortly do so)" (79). Examples of postnationalism are exhibited by Ondaatje in *Running in the Family* as he returns to Sri Lanka as a Canadian citizen and writes, "I am the foreigner. I am the prodigal who hates the foreigner" as his children complain about the heat of the country that D.H. Lawrence despised when he visited what was then Ceylon in 1922 (79). The poet, Pablo Neruda, lived in Sri Lanka for two years as a diplomat for Chile and wrote "poems that saw this landscape governed by a crowded surrealism—full of vegetable oppressiveness" (Ondaatje, *Running* 80). In *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje's niece refers to foreigners, such as Lawrence and Neruda, as "Karapothas," which are beetles with white spots on them (80). This colonialism reference suggests that, like the beetles, the foreigners "never grew ancient here," but just admired the landscape, disliked the natives, and left (80). Ondaatje migrated from Sri Lanka to England and has become not only a Canadian citizen, but a global citizen, as his sense of nationalism and allegiance to Sri Lanka is long gone. In essence, it can be established that postnationalism is a predominant theme in Ondaatje's oeuvre, which are set in many international locations including Sri Lanka, England, Italy and Libya. His characters tend to move beyond traditional constructs such as language, nationality and religion. Ondaatje creates both a modern and postmodern aesthetic in his novels that allow his characters to become embedded into a newly formed praxis of postnationalism. Jernej Habjan's observes, "As the new global city-states with their rentier classes override national jurisdictions, tackling national economies with their neoimperial and/or regionalist projects, the national bildungsroman, too, is being replaced by novels of the metropolis" (347). *Warlight* is a novel that is primarily set in the City of London that has become the global representative for the United Kingdom to the world.

Conclusions

The effects of war and the debunking of the myth of England and the Empire are integral themes in the coming-of-age novel, *Warlight*. With the imploding of the British Empire and its colonialism and imperialism, *Warlight* becomes another sterling example of Ondaatje's works where he undermines the notion of nationhood with strong representations of cosmopolitanism, globalization and postcolonialism in post-World War II London. As an English *bildungsroman*, Nathaniel Williams as the abandoned adolescent protagonist is more of an anti-hero as his formative journey takes him from his traditional

British identity to a more cosmopolitan and postmodernist identity. Once Nathaniel's jeremiad comes to an end, he laments "I felt I too had disappeared. I had lost my youth" (145). Having rejected the English notion of gentlemanliness, Nathaniel chooses to have a career in the Foreign Office in a group known as The Silent Correction, where "the job was to unearth whatever evidence might still remain of actions that history might consider untoward" (133). This is a unique background and setting for a novel of formation set at the beginning of the Cold War. Compared to the multi-national group of characters who detest nationalism and nation-states in *The English Patient*, the sacrificial lambs of the United Kingdom in *Warlight* learn that "wars are never over" (248). Based on Nathaniel's rejection of the prosaic and materialist world, *Warlight* could be interpreted by some as a "Romance of Disillusionment," a term coined by George Lukacs, as opposed to a *bildungsroman* (Luckacs qtd. in Boes, "Modernist Studies" 239). *Warlight* is a novel of formation set in a rapidly changing nation that used colonialism and imperialism to create the façade of being a global superpower, in which Michael Ondaatje successfully challenges the Western metanarratives of colonialism, nationalism, and imperialism.

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Constructing Philippe Rousseau's Self through Text and Musical Theatre

Abstract: At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Philippe Rousseau began writing and creating. His text *Je me souviens mon père* was published in 2003. A few months later Rousseau turned his text into a theatre play, including music and acting; he represented himself on stage. Soon afterwards, more texts were produced: *Passeport pour une Russie* (which was also rewritten as a theatre play) talks about his wanderings in the north of Russia, while *Feintes attentes* (a poetic-erotic dialogue) and *La personne qui te har t*ake into discussion an experience of harassment in addition to a self-representation. This paper proposes a dialogue between the literary critic-researcher, on the one hand, and the author-artist, on the other, a conversation between theory and practice, in short, two ways through which the intellectual and emotional Self can be inserted into the narrative. The theories of autofiction in the literary text, in Rousseau's visual and theatrical art, as well as in music echo the author-artist's lived and integrated practice (Leroux, 2004). According to Doubrovsky (2007), and from what Judith Butler problematizes about in *Le Récit de soi*, not only at the level of an actor, but also at that of the human being in general, the truthfulness and authenticity of the "I" or "me" reside in the subject defining itself/being defined through the possibility of saying, speaking, telling the Self. In addition, the paper reflects on the ethical conditions related to the fictionalised showing of the Self.

Keywords: construction of the Self, autofiction, theatre, music, Philippe Rousseau

Introduction

Ten years after the start of his career as a director and actor, Philippe Rousseau writing's debut was at the beginning of the twenty-first century. First drafted for his father's birthday, Rousseau's text *Je me souviens mon père* was published in 2003. With the anaphora ("je me souviens" [I remember]) dear to French author Georges Perec, Philippe Rousseau painted his father's portrait, and perhaps also his own portrait. Philippe's father knew his son well because when he asked if Philippe would turn his recently written text into a theatre play, he immediately received "yes" as an answer. Thus, with theatre production, musical performance, acting and staging (the author is also an actor in his own plays) this first text became an all-encompassing staging of Rousseau's Self in 2003. From then on, the artist has not stopped writing, producing and acting: *Passeport pour une Russie* (*Passport to a Certain Russia*) (which then became *Mes pas captent le vent* in its stage version) tells of his travels to Lake Baikal in Russia, *Feintes attentes* (*Fake Expectations*), a poetic-erotic dialogue, and *La personne qui te harr*, on harassment at work. This last text describes a person observing another person who is harassed at work. She describes what she sees, perceives, feels... in a monologue written in the second person singular; it shows the process of destruction followed by a slow recovery. The "you" is used to address this person, the audience of the text or perhaps even the person who narrates. Both *Feintes attentes* and *La personne qui te harr* are about self-representation which applies to both the text's self-referential intertextuality and the author's references to his physical presence or the ways that presence is represented in his work.

This contribution is organized as a kind of dialogue between the literary critic-researcher, Ferreira-Meyers, and the author-artist, Philippe Rousseau, a kind of conversation between theory and practice, in short, two ways of telling the intellectual and emotional Self. The theories of autofiction in the literary text, in visual and theatrical art (Leroux, 2004) and in music will echo the artist's lived and integrated practice. Based on the notion of autofiction conceived in 1977 and reformulated by the person who first coined the term, Serge Doubrovsky in 2007, "Autofiction is the means of trying to catch up, to recreate, to reshape lived experiences of one's own life in a text, in writing, which is in no way a reproduction, a photograph of those experiences... It is literally and literarily a reinvention (our translation)" (64).[11]

Our approach is complemented by Judith Butler (2005) who, in *Giving an Account of Oneself,* problematizes not only for the actor, but also for the human being in general, the veracity and authenticity of the "I." The general purpose of our article is to define the subject, the possibility of expressing and conveying a person's Self, and to reflect on accompanying ethical considerations. Our approach is divided into three parts, namely autofiction and theatre, the place of the Self in autofictional theatre, and Philippe Rousseau and otherness.

Autofiction and Theatre

In 1977, the word autofiction was coined by the author and literary critic Serge Doubrovsky to describe his book entitled *Fils, roman*. Doubrovsky also justifies and theorizes autofiction in some subsequent critical essays. Autofiction can be defined as the narrative of events in the author's life in a more or less novel-like form. In fact, the term refers first and foremost to a type of autobiographical fiction, i.e. fiction generically subtitled as a novel, thus allowing for possible fictional statements, and autobiography, where the three instances of the author, narrator and protagonist are united under the same name, that of the author or his usual pseudonym.

The term autofiction has also been extended to the performing arts. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of studies on plays that provide autobiographical information about their authors. It is only since then that this neologism has begun to be applied to theatre, contemporary dance or performance. In many forms of "stage writing," artists frequently speak about themselves. Autofictional theatre includes those plays in which the personality of the playwright (and not that of the director or actor) is present in the configuration of the characters. Anne Monfort (2009) reviews a brief history of autofictional theatre. Here is how she summarizes it:

> When it comes to writing for the theatre, the narrator is present through autofiction. This notion, hitherto reserved for the novel, begins to be identified in theatre: Richter is currently working on a text on autofiction, author Christine Angot and choreographer Mathilde Monnier collaborated for a play entitled *La Place du singe*, which they interpret themselves. In *Foucault 71*, the five performers themselves play the interviews they conducted with the historical protagonists. Since text and stage writing go hand in hand, the concept of autofiction transfers from the author to the actor: as the novelists fictionalize their life in the text, the actors showcase themselves as characters. (Monfort)

Following this observation, could we not link the two words "author" and "actor"? In his practice, Rousseau presents himself in this way, linking the two words with a hyphen: author-actor, erasing the director's intermediate presence in the process. His friends and artists working in the field of the performing arts agree: how to name themselves? The word actor is suggested by several of them in a broader sense: the one who acts, who does an action, the person "acting," which is different from the meaning of the noun "actor." Reflecting on how to name yourself is part of thinking about and positioning the Self, which is the main theme of this article.

[11] All translations in this paper are ours

Where Does the "I"/ "Me" Feature in Autofictional Theatrical Performances?

For Jacques Lecarme (quoted by Ferreira-Meyers, 2008), autofiction can be understood in two distinct ways. Strictly speaking, it refers to a narrative of real facts. Fiction then concerns, not the content evoked, but the process of enunciation, its setting in narrative. In a broader sense, autofiction associates experience with imagination. In this case, fiction substantially affects the narrated content. In 2012, Diana Klinger reflected on the future of autofiction as self-dramatization, which implies, as is the case on a theatre set, a dual subject, both real and fictional, person (actor) and character. We should therefore not, unlike Philippe Lejeune, think in terms of the "real person" and the textual/theatrical character coinciding, as dramatization implies the simultaneous construction of the author and the narrator. In other words, it is a question of considering autofiction as a form of performance.

Thus, we consider Rousseau, the author, in the same way as Klinger does: the subject of a performance of an action in which the subject represents life itself, making pretexts meta-theatrical clues to reality ("life is a dream," "life is theatre," etc.).

Philippe Rousseau and the Other

Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself* is an attempt to identify the part of freedom at work in the stories we forge about ourselves/our Self. Can we be certain that the one the subject is talking about when he narrates himself is the same person? This is what we will try to discover while examining Rousseau's oeuvre.

In Rousseau's work, the Other exists in writing as revealing, a mirror, an inspiring element. With *Je me souviens mon père*, his first book, Rousseau makes an explicit detour via the father mentioned in the title by creating an implicit portrait of the author-son. He signals another otherness through the intertextual reference to Georges Pérec and Joe Brainard with the anaphor *Je souviens* (*I remember*) which starts the 220 sentences of the monologue just as if it was the introduction of the paragraphs of the books of both well-known authors: "I remember I am happy that he is my father. / I remember I am happy to be my children's father."

Modesty? Stylistic exercise (Oulipian?[12] Poetic?)? Distancing? What exactly is at play here? Is the father the Other, or are the father and the Other/author one and the same person?

Othering is further embodied, in 2003, when the first theatre set was prepared, through the interpretation of the character of the narrator by an actor. The author's body remains hidden, remains in the director's role. In 2008, when the play is performed again, the places are exchanged: the 2003 actor took the place/role of actor-director while the author took the place of the actor.

Factual questions arise: the author does not interpret a character, does not *play* a role: he is the (real) son of the father of the title and all the sentences in the play. He uses stage tools (articulation, voice volume, effects, pause, rhythm) but he does not play a character, he does not take on a role. A scene in which anger is portrayed demonstrates this: the actor testifies to using tools of an actor's emotional memory to "play" anger, when the actor-author is carried away by the present in which different elements interact and mix, namely the image of his father, his own image of being his father's son, the image of the text (drafts with amendments, transformations) and, much more than that, by the present of the performance, in which he has to dialogue with the audience and with the musician who deliberately increases the volume of his clarinet to indicate the author-actor's anger.

This is how Rousseau expressed these interactions in a paper written in 2017 for a conference held in Sfax (Tunisia) entitled "L'épreuve scénique comme relecture":

[12] Oulipo: ouvroir de littérature potentielle, the French for "potential literature work." The term refers to an association of literature enthusiasts founded in 1960 by author Raymond Queneau and mathematician François Le Lionnais, to which Italo Calvino and Georges Perec also belonged. Their principle is to write under such formal "constraints" as beginning all the words of a sentence with an "a" or and "e."

> I chose all the words of this text [*Mes pas captent le vent*] and in particular, those of its theatre adaptations (...). Yet every reading or utterance in co-presence [with an audience] surprises me. These words generate effects that influence the ongoing utterance (...). Perhaps this is where the key to these re-readings lies [in public events]? Maybe the clarification of the writing is only an effect whereas its utterance of a mystery in co-presence, in co-assistance is a function?

The "I" is now asserting itself and is no longer hiding. In the performance entitled *Vos désirs sont des ordres*, composed of short poems spoken or sung by the author, the "I" is present:

> I wanted to write these texts to say what I have to say.
> And I say them tonight while thinking about what you wrote to me.
> I would have the desire to know you, all the yous that are here tonight.
> All that I could know about a you that I know for just one evening.
> I could have wanted to take more risks and much earlier too;
> I wanted to do this tonight and you will soon see me back here.

In the last chapter of *Giving an Account of Oneself*, entitled Foucault's critical account of himself, Butler states this amazing thing: "So telling the truth about oneself comes at a price, and the price of that telling is the suspension of a critical relation to the truth regime in which one lives" (121-122). Butler's conclusion is more precisely about Foucault, but it is also general in scope. Concerned about his relationship to life, his own experience, Foucault enters a "narrative of himself" based on the recurring question: "Who might I be for myself?", as Butler pointed out (114).

The Althusserian notion of interpellation, which Butler uses, shows that consciousness is essential to the subject's formation, to the construction of the Self; the subject hailed by the police officer turns around to face the force that has challenged him. In other words, it is responsibility before the Other that invokes self-reflection. This means, according to Butler, that responsibility, which manifests itself in acts of discourse in the form of "giving an account of oneself," only takes place in response to an interpellation or an investigation by another. I narratively realize myself because I am spoken to, asked to speak to the one who speaks to me and I thus construct myself/my Self as a reflexive being in front of the Other.

As Kim Sang Ong-Van-Cung notes: "In the discourse on oneself, we accept the norms of truth which structure the discourse held before the Other; we say 'I,' although there is no 'I' outside of the relation to the Other; and so we strive for a form of coherence and intelligibility. All speech obeys a truth regime without which it cannot be heard" (149).

Butler's conclusion is that subjects cannot really narrate themselves, that they are limited in their search for recognition (by themselves and by others) and therefore must be allowed to give several versions of themselves.

With *Mes pas captent le vent*, published in 2010 under the title *Passeport pour une Russie* and launched on stage in 2011, the function of otherness is evolving. This story recounts the author's travels from Moscow to Lake Baikal via Irkutsk, by plane, by Transsiberian railway, by bus, by subway or on foot, and tells the story of a man's initiatory journey to Russia. Between emptiness and vertigo, between contemplation and reception, advancing step by step, the narrator hesitates, doubts, encounters, receives. He walks. What is he looking for? What does he miss? Where will his steps lead him? To Jehanne? Mind and body wide open, he passes from airlock to airlock, guided by his life impulse. Otherness is explicitly present in the encounters narrated by the author-actor, but it is much more in the writing that otherness is present and claimed, that otherness has effects, influences, consequences. The author has developed this idea in several of his articles and papers. In short, the encounter with linguistic, cultural, geographical and spiritual otherness (shamanism) influences Rousseau's writing. The latter is characterized by the use

of phonic and rhythmic games, word inventions, syntax modifications, the enhancement of action verbs, the lack of coordination conjunctions, adverbs, subjective qualifying adjectives. If the search for the Self and the Other was already present in *Je me souviens mon père*, the encounter with the Russian language and Russia reinforces, develops this search:

> The traveler-narrator has a special relationship with otherness. He accepts it without expecting anything from it. It is probably not otherness that he seeks but, rather, its encounter without anticipation, without prejudice, without "pre" of any kind. He accepts the effects that this otherness has on him. He moves forward because he does not know. He lets it happen and receives, perceives. Otherness passes through him. He is modified by othernesses/differences, by otherness, by Otherness. He becomes Otherness.
> [The] only implicit link ends up being reversed in the following leitmotiv: "The more I advance in this journey, the less I know where I am going." Repeated six times throughout the trip, this link is reversed in the epilogue. It is a question of survival: "If I stop, frost will kill me. I walk. The water-land is holding me up. My steps capture the ground. They advance me. The less I know where I am going, the more I progress on this trip." ("Comment l'expérience interculturelle..." (90))

Moreover, this literary search leads to the construction of a language nourished by otherness, modified by otherness and expressing how otherness lives within the author.

Carnet de voyage en maison de retraite (*Travel diary in a Retirement Home*) continues this process. It offers readers a glimpse into daily life in a retirement home. Feelings of tenderness and modesty alternate with strong sentiments indicating the author's upheavals that this writing experience, this entering in an EHPAD (Etablissement Hébergeant des Personnes Agées Dépendantes) provoked in the author-"traveler." Old age, dependence, loss of memory, loss of means, death, the place of families appear as a watermark and question us, readers. A text "made to order" ("Myriam, Catherine and Clara told me 'What you did in Russia, come and do it here, come and travel to an EHPAD and turn your experience into a travel journal.' They are right, I don't know this country"), this text, in addition to reflecting this particular journey, integrates into it the transformations, the questions that otherness provokes in the travel writer, the author-"traveler":

Old age, dependency, memory loss, loss of means, death, the place of family, all these topics are present and question us, us the readers, in the following passage:

> She is old, he is old.
> He's the same, she is no better.
> At their age, at their age,
> I will be as old as they are.
>
> She calms down. She falls asleep. She wears a death mask.
> She breathes. I take a breath. I cry.
>
> Should I be thinking of this at my age? What kind of old person will I be?
> Is this the right time to think of this? How old will I get to be?
> Should I be thinking of this at my age? What kind of old person will I be?
> My angel should protect me. Will I get to that age?

Je suis riche de mes vols is a monologue of a person twenty years after she experienced incest, twenty years of "forgetting" what happened. This person describes the moments when her body protected itself from her father's aggression with mechanisms described by neuroscience as disembodiment or the production of natural morphine or endorphin. The text poetically describes the moments of denial and finally those of reconciliation between who she was at the time of the trauma and who she has become.

Rousseau integrates otherness in a different way. The “I” of the monologue could be attributed to the author. After all, we know that he is going to Russia, that he has lived in a retirement home, and described all this in his previous literary works. Why would he not use the same approach here? Especially since epicene writing does not indicate the gender of the person who testifies in the first-person singular. Here, the presence of otherness is more complex. The author is not the character who is the victim of incest. In "real" life, he is "only" a person who has listened to the testimony of relatives in this situation. Rather, the writing of the text here questions what it feels like to listen to these testimonies. At the same time, the author develops the testimonies and questions his place when confronted to these people. His writing questions the effects that these testimonies have had on him, not only the effects but also the fact that he can “easily,” “self-evidently,” be a “confidant” of rape and incest victims

The monologues, dialogues continue, are amplified, being a resonance box to the work started through writing. The author-actor re-states the words, “breathes out” the text, chews the sounds, articulates the jostled syntax and transformed words. His voice and his body are in dialogue with the musicians. All this resonates in the space, in the bodies of the spectators and echoes in the body of the actor-author.

During rehearsals that the musicians and the author-actor refer to as training, the author may sometimes let himself become complacent. Thus, being in co-presence with the spectators leads to a form of emotional restraint made necessary by the intention of transmission, by the intention of sharing. This restraint allows the text to vibrate even better in the space and in all the bodies that this space contains. Co-presence (author-actor-audience) is therefore necessary for the utterances to take place.

In this space and time, we (re)listen to the text, what it has to say, to do, to produce as an effect, both to the sender-author and to the receivers. The meaning of the text is not defined, determined once and for all, unlike the objective most frequently stated by the director of a text (to render what they have understood about it). Here, even if the sender is the author, he does not control the meaning(s). He does not want to. This type of soul-searching, construction of the Self is closer to the practices of storytellers, dancers and musicians than those of theatre directors.

Music has (at least) two functions: to help, to accompany, to provoke this utterance in a modified state of consciousness and also to help the effects, the intellectual, spiritual, emotional/body comprehensions as well as to anchor themselves in the bodies. Music is created in the present. It remains improvised, it provokes and, at the same time, accepts variations, changes and searching into the performative action of the author-actor. The music causes an on/off in the modified state of consciousness of the author-actor.

The musicians listen, encourage, revive but also bring the author-actor back to the present of the performance, catch the author-actor if he indulges in an emotion harmful to the transmission of the message. They are like the shaman's assistants who pull the shaman back when they think that he goes too far or stays too long in the other world.

Tools as well as effects, spoken poetry produces autofiction, neither autobiography nor fiction: another "self" that has an effect on the former "self." Another objective of poetry is what Olivier Rolin in *Bricet Broc* describes as follows: “A poet, as Valéry more or less states, should not say that it rains: he should make it rain. Saying that it rains, that is what journalists do. ‘Making it rain,’ that is pure beauty (15).

It is a tool of modesty and at the same time something that makes it possible to say anything and everything, or more precisely, to hide that it is being said and to prefer to do so, to suggest it. For example, in *Passeport pour une Russie*: "The dawn will be beautiful at the end of this sleepless night" (in the French version, there is wordplay between ‘insomnie’: sleeplessness, and ‘Inuit’: the Inuit people).

Another example would be this intuition about the possible interplay between the verb “iront” and the pronoun “elle” to create “Hirondelle” (which in French means “swallow,” a bird that goes, flies away), an intuition that took time to give this sentence from *Feintes Attentes*: "My joys will go by themselves to

make a spring" (literally: the joys will go by themselves to make a spring but also figuratively: one swallow does not make a summer”).

Poetry is also a response to the difficulty and refusal to “represent,” to show, to create a scenography. Poetry is an alternative to “representation,” to “saying it rains.” It makes it possible to “make it rain” in everyone's imagination. Rousseau uses the suggestive forces of poetry and sound.

He adopts this sentence from Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringan, taken from *Annuaire théâtral*, a Quebec Journal on the study of theatre: “I wanted to reveal to ‘what point the visual elements can, in fact, be left out most easily in any artistic or dramatic media or in any means of communication (because the audience can do that on its own)’” (77-78).

While visual elements are valued in our society in general and in the theatre in particular, they can also be suppressed (we close our eyes, we turn off the lights) while we cannot close our ears. At this point, the visual can be (re)created by the audience which have become listeners (see also the existence of the term *Audience* in English). Moreover, they can create what they want; we will not and cannot verify what they created.

This poetic construction allows polysemy. It makes us see, perceive, feel a mystery, everything that is not possible with a visual element. It allows our receptors (ears and mind) to project their own personal history. The author participates in debates to find out if the father of *Je me souviens mon père* is alive or deceased and the supporters of a living father have a father who is still alive and vice versa. The epicene writing of the last two texts gives the audience permission to integrate the texts in the genre that the receiver/audience wished to read/hear.

The “I” seen and heard on stage is completed by the receivers’ “I.” We do not focus on this aspect here, but it could be part of a future study. It should be noted, however, that modified states of consciousness are used dynamically: they are part of writing methods and the uttering of the text in turn generates them. The main purpose of the performative utterance in the presence of an audience and especially with the assistance of that audience, is to hear the mystery of the poetry, to provoke modified states of consciousness and to feel its effects, which become addictive.

Audiences speak of “synaesthesia” concerning the effects produced by poetry. The senses are disturbed, we know that there is an image—as in Kandinsky's paintings, according to an audience member—but without knowing exactly the image, “so we recompose” it. Speech, speaking, saying words all constitute performances. We hear sounds and see a body speaking in the present and not in the dramaturgy of the story. Performing, in the sense of “investing oneself in a performance, a game or a ritual”, involves the following four operations, according to Schechner (2002):

1) “being” in the sense of “behaving/acting”.
2) “doing”.
3) “showing doing”
4) and an analytical dimension, which is not always present: the explanation of the “showing doing”; this is where researchers and literary critics come in; this refers to thinking about the world of performance and the world as performance.

These verbs (which represent actions) are at stake in any performance. Sometimes separated and sometimes combined, but they never exclude each other. On the contrary, they often interact in the staging process.

Rousseau performs his Self using these four action verbs, which are also very present in his writing. As stated in the article already quoted:

> The narrator is valued within the action through simple sentences with a single conjugated verb. So there are very few stative verbs and no subordinate clauses. He walks. [18 occurrences of this verb conjugated in the first person singular of the present tense]. He buys and eats "kisses" (Schechner 37). He looks, listens, "does not understand everything" (62). Action verbs are created for the text: "the water messes with my bones" (62). [...] Actions and sensations replace emotion and psychology.

This leads to what Butler describes as follows: "recognition becomes the process by which I become other than what I was and so cease to be able to return to what I was" (27). Thus, the character of *Mes pas captent le vent* will affirm as he passes the security gate at the airport, in the second sequence, with a rare use of stative verbs: "I am no longer the one I was. I am on my way to the one I will be" (*Passeport pour une Russie,* 16).

Butler adds: "In the making of the story, I create myself in new form, instituting a narrative 'I' that is superadded to the 'I' whose past life I seek to tell. The narrative 'I' effectively adds to the story every time it tries to speak, since the 'I' appears again as the narrative perspective, and this addition cannot be fully narrated at the moment in which it provides the perspectival anchor for the narration in question" (39-40). The performative narrative, the "re-listening" effect, a theme developed in Rousseau's paper entitled "L'épreuve scénique comme relecture," thus creates a dynamic circle of rewriting and permanent evolution. Butler continues as follows: "To know the limits of acknowledgment is to know even this fact in a limited way; as a result, it is to experience the very limits of knowing. This can, by the way, constitute a disposition of humility and generosity alike: I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are also constituted in partial opacity to themselves" (42).

This is the experience lived on stage, where Rousseau's text is spoken. This posture of humility and generosity translates into a performative body between three positions: to see (the space, musicians and listeners, performances are often done with an audience on which a spotlight is shone), to show what is written, narrated, told and shown or at least to show the effects that speech has on the author-actor's body.

Conclusions

Rousseau's writing, in its various forms (in this case specifically his writing for theatre) ends up becoming an attempt to recreate the experiences of his own life, often filling the text with the defects of empirical, real, possible life. As Doubrovsky (2007) put it so well, autofiction is the fiction that one decides, as a writer, to present about and by oneself: "Autofiction is the means of trying to catch up, to recreate, to reshape lived experiences of one's own life in a text, in writing, which is in no way a reproduction, a photograph of those experiences... It is literally and literarily a reinvention" (64).

Playwright Rousseau turns his character(s) into a performance in its own right. Dramatizing himself, he enters the dilemma created between truth and lies. For Doubrovsky, if the author's truth is the fiction he constructs, then the truth of the fiction is fictional. We see that it is no longer a constructed life that is told, but a life in construction, which takes place at the exact moment of fictionalizing, of writing.

It does not matter here whether what is reported is false or true; it is the fiction that the subject creates for himself that counts. Autofiction can be understood as a true or false, historical or fictional discourse. An analogy of autofiction can be made with the paradox attributed to Euclid of Milet (4th century BC): "If someone says 'I lie,' and what he says is true, the statement is false; and if what he says is false, the statement is true and therefore still false" (Klinger 48). Consequently, the author can say that everything he writes is false. If that is true, it is true in his statement; if it is false, it is still true. Another possible analogy can be made with the animals in Christian Garcin's book *Les papillons de la Léna*. This book combines a series of stories each featuring a particular animal and set in and around the Russian

river Lena. Each of these animals repeat the following: "so true is it that, for us as for all other animals, except hominids, it is never very easy to see the difference between dream and reality, if someone even knows what reality is" (Garcin 26).

The author's fictional texts and public life are the faces of the same subjective production, making life—and even his writing—an instance that cannot be considered in isolation. Thanks to elements of identification and the hundreds of paratextual readings that are allowed, the degree of comprehension of a given text is broadened. And we can see, through stories, chronicles and especially plays, that, in real life, the author *plays a role*. Performance and autofiction are presented as unfinished works, "as if the reader were watching the process of writing "living its life"" (Klinger 51).

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Calculated Narratives in Mexican *Titulares*

Abstract: This paper explores the extent to which socio-political narratives about the U.S. and Mexico are circulated via Mexican headlines between the years 2000-2015, and questions if calculated jargon is orchestrated and distributed to serve national socio-political interests. It examines whether discursive formations represented by newspaper headlines function as a type of conformist, antipathetic, reproachful narrative producer that generates sentiment in the same manner that the Latino Threat Narrative, theorized by Leo Chavez, produces self-serving iterations of Latino (specifically Mexican) personification in the U.S. It then discusses the importance that geography has had in developing a political narrative within Mexico and proceeds to discuss how threat narratives are constructed with such historiography in mind. Finally, it analyzes headline jargon in the Mexican periodicals *El Norte, Reforma,* and *Mural* between 2000-2015. It is the intent of this paper to outline what function headline jargon serves in Mexican narrative arenas, and to examine whether the way they challenge the U.S. reconstitutes a Mexican identity, or establishes completely different priorities and socio-political agendas. Specific deliberation of Mexican print media geared towards a Mexican audience is absent from discussions on how the LTN and its counter-narrative effort operate.

Keywords: Headlines, Latino Threat Narrative, Mexico, Immigration, Border

Introduction

In the U.S.-produced Latino Threat Narrative, fueled by a generally white nationalist perspective, Mexicans are depicted as an enemy to social and economic institutions. This theory, originally posited by Leo Chavez, reveals the role that print media has played in the perpetuation of this stereotype in the broad U.S. public consciousness, and demonstrates how headlines are an effective tool to bolster fear-mongered racialized space.

While his work is exemplary in its consideration of the calculated constructions broadcasted via U.S. print media, it does not consider what is produced in Mexico and whether that has had an equally as deliberate position in propagating a specific narrative towards the U.S. To address this gap and to highlight features of Mexican rhetoric between 2000-2015 as compared to that which was circulated by U.S. print newspaper media, I have examined Mexican headlines against U.S. counterparts. A contrasted yet intertwined dialogue emerges with one side (the U.S.) remaining reticent while the other (Mexico) becoming more forthright. I explore this duality using a framework informed by María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's work on racialized geography, Lee Bebout's notion of "ocular currency", images of the U.S. within Mexico as discussed by Stephen Morris, and Aviva Chomsky's deliberations on the U.S.' susceptibility to politicized fictions.

I selected the year 2000 as the starting focal date as it fell one year before the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, i.e. before the subsequent policy changes to immigration and the escalation of public terrorism fears in the United States. The year 2000 is also well after the North American Free Trade Agreement had been entrenched, Operation Gatekeeper (and the like) had been carried out, and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act had long been engrained. It was believed that NAFTA would lead to the creation of more jobs and better economic stability in Mexico negating the need to immigrate to the U.S. While debating the specific positive and negative effects of NAFTA is not the intent

here, it is important to note that NAFTA contributed to widening the economic social gap between wealthy and poor population sectors (cf. Chomsky).

Operation Gatekeeper represented a shift towards a more militarized tactical ideology along the U.S.-Mexican Border. It had two unanticipated results: first, the number of migrants who died while attempting to cross the border increased because of crossing in more remote areas. Second, those who crossed opted to stay in the U.S. for much longer periods of time to avoid the risks of crossing the border again (Nevins). The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 placed a legal responsibility and penalty on employers for recruiting and/or hiring undocumented immigrants. It also legalized undocumented immigrants who had entered the country before January 1982, had resided in the U.S. continuously with no significant legal quandaries to note, and could demonstrate a reasonable knowledge of the English language and American culture.

These particular events contributed to creating an environment in which anti-Latino/a rhetoric in the U.S. would remain at a constant boil as the millennium began. An intense "rhetoric of exclusion" and "public anxiety over immigration and related issues of multiculturalism, [Latino] race, and national identity [security]" had been decisively established by the year 2000 as a direct consequence of the above-mentioned historical moments (Chavez, "Covering Immigration" 8, 12).

Origins and Geographies of a Political Narrative

Perspectives of a "Mexican Other" have become stunted into generalized caricatures that are reinforced by media and political dialogue: drug smugglers, female breeders (with the sole objective of birthing an "anchor baby"), nationalists bent on invading and reconquering lost lands, imbecilic manual laborers, and freeloaders (Bebout 33-106, Chavez, 1-12, 80-81; Chomsky, "How Immigration" 87-112; Morris 17-25). While collecting and examining headline samples from Mexican periodicals and considering them against the backdrop of Chavez's Latino Threat Narrative, perhaps most unexpected is how anti-Mexican cautionary propaganda in the U.S. is nearly identical in rhetoric, presentation, and distribution in the late nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century, and now again in the first quarter of the twenty-first century (Bebout 33-106, Chavez, Guitérrez "Walls and Mirrors," Nevins).

This is surprising when one compares the duration of these distorted labels to other immigrant groups that also encountered intervals of racism and/or ethnic backlash at the start of their migration and settlement, yet arguably abated over time (Chavez 33, Chomsky, "How Immigration" 42-48).[13] In attempting to address why such narrative stunting has occurred, it is important to note that within the U.S., "representations of Mexico [and] Mexicans... are deployed to construct white identity, or more accurately white identity as American identity" (Bebout 2). Over and over again, the legacies and discursive traditions that Mexican-centric threat narratives are drawn from have been the ones that consistently endeavor to "naturalize whiteness" and radicalize (Mexican) brownness (Bebout 2).

The notion of representation is particularly key in embarking on an examination of the Mexican inward/upward gaze since it manifests quite distinctly from its northern neighbor. In *Indian Giver: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States*, Saldaña-Portillo discusses perceptions, accuracies, and misrepresentations of "self" versus "other" in these two nations out of which emerges a clearer picture as to how present-day print narratives have been fortified within Mexico. She borrows from Octavio Paz, who branded "all" Mexicans as being "Hijos de la Malinche"; all are "the sons of mother-Malinche, who he characterizes as the victim of violation, of a fraud" (12-13). Under such guise, the Mexican idiom "hijo de la chingada" ("son of a bitch") implies a much more profound sense of defilement and ignominy than the Spanish equivalent "hijo de puta" ("son of a bitch"). A point of linguistic clarification about these two

[13] Other immigrant groups such as German, Polish and Italian. The obvious exception to a lessening of immigrant-directed racism and ethnic backlash would be African Americans.

idioms is necessary. "Hijo de la chingada" would most literally mean the son of one who was "screwed" according to Mexican regional jargon.[14] While "screwed" in this context is sexual, it could also convey "screwed over." "Hijo de puta" is literally the son of a whore. It is also sexual in nature and an insult but does not convey the same defilement that "hijo de la chingada" does. A "puta," while generally observed as a debased profession, suggests that the woman maintains even the most miniscule amount of volition in her harlotry while "chingada," with translations consisting of both literal fornication and a figurative bamboozle and/or disconcertment, concedes nothing voluntarily. Thus, an "hijo de la chingada" ("all" Mexicans) has much less agency than an "hijo de puta" because they were conceived from an act of total forced occupation, a raping of the corporeal in equal part to the landscape.

It is the latter that is necessary to consider here. If Mexican territory is conceived of as mother-Malinche, and the "stripping open" promulgated by the "masculine agency of the Spaniard" is superimposed over the land, then it becomes easy to see how the products of the violation (future generations) are "consequently engendered as humiliated, enraged, and brutish subjects" (Saldaña-Portillo 13). While Paz generalizes that "*all* Mexicans are *hijos de la chingada*/sons of the fucked one."

Saldaña-Portillo also adds that "[a]t the same time, because all Mexicans are also engendered by the Spaniards who raped and conquered, the hijo de la chingada also contains within himself the one who rapes, the *chingón*" (13) (translation ours).[15] This presents a complex personal and geographical duality of simultaneously co-existing as mother-Malinche and father-chingón, or progeny of the one who was raped and the rapist. As will be demonstrated, present day motivations behind selective and calculated verbiage seen in Mexico-based headline production are enveloped in this paradox of self-identifying as "equally injured by/responsible for/born of colonialism" and reveal a "historical anxiety" about having been equally "defrauded and defrauder" (Saldaña-Portillo 14).

Devising the Threat

Viewing land, territory, borders, and the like as artificial constructions encouraged by racial motivations underscores the point that "racial geography is a technology [a calculation] of power... [a] series of techniques used to produce space [and ownership/rights to access] in racial terms" (Saldaña-Portillo 17). Yet how to visualize the parameters of such boundaries when physical barriers are not and were not always present? Brief, easily consumable, word-based mediums have proved useful in this endeavor, acutely so in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with the advent and mass proliferation of social media information sharing.

Chavez identified several strategies that have been employed in the U.S. to craft the specific spectacle needed to secure and perpetuate the anxiety-peddling Latino Threat Narrative (LTN) message. They served as a launching pad when shifting the gaze from narratives being produced within the U.S. for an American audience to those in Mexico for a Mexican audience. Boiled down to its most rudimentary elements, particular scaremonger or doomsayer themes are selected with the intent to exploit throughout as many public forums as possible. "Foreign," "invasion," and "predator" are three of many verbiage examples that could be selected. "Simple dichotomies"—us / them, invaded / invaders, victims / destroyers, legitimate / illegal, and citizens / non-citizens—also exaggerate a sense of "otherness" via a careful selection of emotionally evocative words ("Latino Threat" 138).

These trigger words become a near daily part of rhetoric delivered by both print (magazines, newspapers, blogs) and auditory outlets (radio and television talk shows, nightly news broadcasts). They are often combined with imagery designed to intensify the reader's focus on the particular LTN word(s) or

[14] In Mexico, "chingar" is a colloquialism with numerous applications ranging from mundane to vulgar. In the context here, it falls on the vulgar end of the spectrum most closely defined in English as "to fuck," "to fuck over," or "to fuck with."

[15] All Spanish-to-English translations in this paper are ours.

phrase(s) while implanting a reactionary (but estimated) visual association. Visual caricatures that are raised upon referencing "Mexico" or "Mexican" are thus "etched in the mind's eye," consequently facilitating the cashing-in of the "ocular currency" coined by Bebout, that enables a constant and reinforcing interchange of word-to-image associations (40).

In early 2016, then-Republican Presidential Nominee Donald Trump used this tactic with his first official television campaign ad. The imagery was touted as being filmed at the southern U.S.-Mexico border. Indistinct bodies move with a sporadic urgency to cross the boundary. An anti-immigrant (anti-Mexico) political rhetoric is overlaid as the image plays with the intent to further entice the viewer towards believing that such incidents represent a type of truth about what is happening in the supposedly outlaw-ridden border region. While the LTN intent is obvious, the video imagery actually hails from the Italian television network Repubblica TV, and reports on migrants attempting to cross into Melilla, a small Spanish owned enclave on the Moroccan coast, as C. Eugene Emery and Louis Jacobson from *Politifact* proved in January 2016, in "Donald Trump's first TV ad shows migrants 'at the southern border,' but they're actually in Morocco."

Mexico-based newspaper headlines express a sense of incredulity and exasperation towards these infectious threat narratives consumed by its northern neighbor. They invoke a type of "Mexicanosmosis," a term I have coined based on William Nericcio's theory of "Xicanosmosis," "whereby Chicana/o cultural workers [or in this case Mexicana/o]... actively work to undermine the long history of white supremacist symbolization, producing images that subvert the Mexican Other and infiltrate the eyes and minds of readers and viewers" (Nericcio qtd. in Bebout 48). This, in turn, provides a space and creates sustainable momentum to reassume control of one's "otherness" and to redirect the course that propagated written dialogue (i.e., newspaper headlines) and resulting mental caricatures take.

As is currently recognized, the LTN is an "exploration of the Mexican image [only] in the white mind" (Bebout 42). The following analysis attempts to reveal what the contemporary Mexican image in Mexico-produced context might consist of; what is the ocular currency when the gaze is shifted to an internal Mexico-on-Mexico forum, or when the gaze is shifted upwards and outwards (the gringo image according to the mind of the "hijo de la chingada," the "chingón," the "other").

Alternative Narratives

Mexico did not remain taciturn when confronted with the propagation of such escalated and wildly hyperbolized depictions (drug smugglers, female breeders, invaders, imbecilic laborers, and freeloaders) of Mexicans. An increase in bombastic dialogue against Mexico between the 1970s-1990s had the objective to presumably secure the assignation of Mexican immigrants as a diminutive social sect, able to be controlled at the whims of the private sector and political arena (Johnson 11-13). It coincided with a Mexican PR attempt to counter the threat narrative's circulation in the United States. Mexican-made photo exhibits, videos, and films highlighting Mexico in a positive light were produced and distributed during that period of time to directly challenge the LTN visual and written narratives (Johnson 14). In fact, "[e]mployees in Mexican government tourist offices were responsible for attending or exhibiting at conferences and giving speeches about Mexico in many U.S. cities" with nearly 90% of these activities taking place in the 1980s (Johnson 14), precisely when fear within the U.S. towards Mexicans and Mexicans immigrants was experiencing a resurgence.

This is tantamount to injecting an alternative de-escalation Mexi-centric narrative in the mix to counter the pervasive, negative, and inaccurate images of Mexico. As Johnson explains, "[a]lthough much of 1940s-1980s media coverage of Mexico focused on problems such as student repression, immigration, and drugs… in 1983 the Mexican government paid for updates about U.S. positions... signifying that Mexico monitored U.S. positions in the region," and assumingly would adapt their public relations and media strategies accordingly (17-18). Much of Mexico's focus and strategy in terms of identifying target audiences

came to center around political and economic power centers of the U.S. (Washington, members of Congress, U.S. agencies, etc.), or rather precisely those entities that were deeply involved with the extreme marginalization and exclusion of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., and the instigators for the increasingly pervasive propagation of an anti-Mexican immigrant stance.

Serna details a curious event in 1918 that involved a visit to Washington D.C. by twenty editors from the top Mexican "diarios" ("newspapers") as ambassador-type representatives with the *Comité de la Información Pública* (Public Information Committee). This event was touted as being of significant importance in the long history of "relaciones diplomáticas" ("diplomatic relations") between the two nations (Serna 208). While this vague declaration was perhaps true in the sense that some of D.C.'s most prominent political figures of the time participated in this summit, further examination of motives reveals a direct conflict for both countries that would only perpetuate the already prevalent (and increasingly fossilized) perceptions each nation held towards the other (dim-witted inferior Mexicans and bullying duplicitous Americans, the latter of which is a staple of the LTN).

On the U.S. side, "Its purpose was to use them as the spearhead of a propaganda campaign to improve the U.S.' image in Mexico" (Serna 208). On the Mexican side, "this strategy conflicted with the nationalist spirit of Venustiano Carranza's government" an administration that was vocally skeptical and opposing of its northern neighbor (Serna 208). On a national scale within the U.S., disparaging narratives towards Mexicans were being consumed by a public that was more than likely unaware that the comparatively small sect of government officials were welcoming "enemy" journalists in. Nationally within Mexico, the public was bombarded by presidential and governmental rhetoric that reflected a long-held skepticism of U.S. motives and in fact was generally not supportive of their journalists participating in the journalistic summit (which was reported on much more extensively in Mexico than in the U.S.), let alone those from the most prominent and impactful sources of news, opinion, and propaganda.

With such internal and external tensions in mind, Serna's most important question throughout her analysis is "¿cuál sería la contribución de la prensa Mexicana a las relaciones de México con el extranjero?" ("what would be the contribution of the Mexican press to Mexico's relations abroad") (209). There is an intriguing wordplay at work here since it positions North America as the "extranjero" (outsider/foreigner) rather than the more common portrayal of Mexico/Mexicans, by the U.S. media, as the outsider/foreigner, and it implies that the most important "relation abroad" of all of Mexico's international relations is with the United States. In response to this question, and most relevant for the periodical content examined here, is how this early twentieth century period of time enacted fundamental changes in the behaviors of periodical reporting that are still evident today. Younger writers forcefully seized the journalistic baton at precisely the moment that the general Mexican public, as consequence of the revolution, "aroused interest in news and for updated and punctual information... The journalist's work acquired a new public role: he saw himself as a man of action who took to the streets to be a witness to the facts" (Serna 209). Such revitalized energy instigated a process of self-promotion and self-interest in the spheres of national rhetorical representation. Authenticity became a reoccurring theme and insatiable desire of Mexican newspaper writing and distribution, as did a massive shift upwards in terms of its professionalization.

Returning to the topic of the PR campaign of the 1970s-1990s, the placement of advertisements, etc. suggests that those individuals leading the positive Mexi-centric media efforts were perhaps ill informed about their U.S. audience and the actual depth of anti-Mexican sentiment since they opted to focus on such a narrow segment of the population as precisely those aiding in propagating that very narrative. A threat narrative is not constructed to sway the opinions and reactions of those constructing the rhetoric but rather those listening to it, wholly relying on the notion that the audience will either not be well-informed enough to decipher the misinformation or hyperbole or is simply disinterested enough to take the rhetoric at face value (Chavez, "Latino Threat"). By focusing their efforts entirely on a limited political

and economic sector, the more important general U.S. public did not see the harmless, nearly wholesome, Mexico that the folks steering the PR campaign were attempting to propagandize (Johnson 18).

In the 2000s, an intriguing collision emerged in this vexed space of clashing wholesome/ blemished and white/brown narrative negotiations that was once limited to the border region yet, because of social media and rapid trans-border interconnectivity, is now prolific throughout both nations. The U.S. response to such collisions has been an intensive legal engineering of preserving national space as belonging to (white) citizens while simultaneously strengthening not only the continuation but the proliferation of exclusionary space for the non-citizen non-white individual. The products of calculated exclusionary legislation and subsequent social practice are pointedly engineered to protect, maintain, and bolster a "white propertied class" who has high stakes "investment in their whiteness" (Saldaña-Portillo 26). While this may not be new in U.S. or border region racial and cultural histories, motivations behind (and components of) the LTN in the U.S. are being directly challenged by the large U.S.-based undocumented Latino/a community and alternative narratives in Mexico. Increased and enduring spatial collision between the U.S. and Mexico is thus not merely "vexed" territorial and physical space, but vexed psychic spaces that become evident in the headline-specific textual selections examined below (Saldaña-Portillo 25).

In the book, *Gringolandia: Mexican Identity and Perceptions of the United States*, Morris suggests that "[l]ittle is known about the nature of Mexicans' complex sentiments towards their northern neighbor ["sus primos del norte", i.e. "their cousins to the North"], the role such images play in shaping national identity or public policy... or [how] political changes (democratization) contest past images or what might be emerging in their place" (2). Morris ponders internal Mexican cultural production to explore what traits are "stressed" or "downplayed" and attempts to identify what the perceived impact is that U.S. discursive formations have on Mexico as a nation or for the Mexican citizens living there (3).

Important to realize here is how U.S. imagery in Mexico is not "static" but "fluid," constantly being influenced and modified by external factors such as social media that permit a type of ebb and flow of public narrative construction and general perception (Morris 4-5, 26-28). Since much of this information and image sharing technology is bred from within the U.S., this same fluidity and pliability does *not* occur within the broad U.S. public forum; the imagery, what is stressed, and what is downplayed, in regards to Mexico and the Mexican people, is fixed and has been for decades (Chavez, "Latino Threat"; Chomsky).

The power of connotative messaging cannot be understated in either situation, Mexican or American, nor can the "contextuality of action" that it breeds, or the "common settings" and "mutual knowledge" likewise perpetuated by such deliberate communiqué dispatching, that are so necessary for a threat narrative to flourish (Chavez, "Latino Threat"- 42; Giddens 99). If American newspaper headlines are steeped in verbiage that directly connect with broader socio-cultural narratives, infiltrated with uncritically accepted social and political credo (blind acceptance by the masses is indeed the imperium of a successful threat narrative), it is an apt assertion that they cannot, and should not, be dismissed as a random, superficial "phenomena" in Mexico either.

Titulares Mexicanos/Mexican Headlines

I examined headlines between 2000-2015 from the *El Norte* (Monterrey), *Mural* (Guadalajara), and *Reforma* (Mexico City) newspapers to investigate whether the same catch phrase and trigger word phenomena were occurring in Mexico, and whether rhetorical objectives served a similar purpose as the LTN in the United States. I extracted the basic tenets of the LTN and applied them to newspaper headlines printed and distributed in the Mexican cities of Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mexico City on the basis that an identical contextuality of action, common setting, and mutual knowledge should be equally as present and influential for the Mexican national reader as a sampling from New York, Houston, and Los Angeles would be for the gringo-centric U.S. reader.

Of course, regional idiosyncrasies exist, but the purpose of selecting publications from three different regions is to demonstrate the pervasiveness with which a uniform threat narrative diffuses on a national scale. Additionally, the Mexican newspaper reader is, presumably, hailing from the same social or national pool as the Mexican national magazine reader, thus employing (or perhaps succumbing to) the same cultural assumptions and identity markers due to the possession of, and influence by, a Mexi-centric forum. It would not be logical for a radical divergence in messaging to occur in this case from one print media type to another (social and political stance aside; obviously a conservative publication would differ from its liberal counterpart, but conservative and liberal publications across media types would sing the same tune regardless of medium). In focusing this consideration on Mexican publications rather than U.S., a current void in contemporary consideration of the "illegal problem" is addressed, and a perspective that is muzzled (at least insofar as the U.S. audience is aware) is admitted into the discursive arena.

Chavez established several catch phrases and trigger words that are employed as a type of urgent "call to arms" to heighten the threat that Mexican immigrants supposedly pose to the safety and stability of the United States. These include the following: repetition of "illegal alien" and "problem" in the same sentence, "crisis," "out of control," "invasion," "troubling neighbors," "danger" (on the border and in American border communities), "curse" (as related to proximity and population), and the "warning" of the U.S. becoming a "Hispanic nation" or a veritable "Améxica," (30-42).

Methods

Before delving into headline content specific to El Norte, Mural, and Reforma, I first conducted generalized searches for "immigration" and "border" using the Google Trends database. This tool permits term searches according to location, time period, thematic category, and format (YouTube video, image, etc.). Results can be compared according to interest over time and against additional search terms, and show related topics and similar queries (lending itself to cursory comparisons in order to establish key words).

I began by casting a wide net with the word "Mexico" as the location, 2000-2015 as the time period, "all categories" as the theme, and "web" as the format. As anticipated, the large quantity of data necessitated that each subsequent search narrow around more precise search parameters ("Mexico City" during the year 2000 with a "News" theme, and "News search" result format, for example). I repeated this exercise several times to observe associations between variables such as year and location and switched languages between English and Spanish. On the machine used for this initial stage, there was potential for results to be influenced by search engine algorithms based on search habits or account logins by previous Internet browser users. To attempt to mediate this, I conducted this same Google Trends experiment at Kreitzberg Library at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont (a conservative military institution), the Baker-Berry Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire (a private Ivy League university), and the Howe Public Library in Hanover, New Hampshire (a free and public library in a predominately liberal town) using different machines each time.

The data collected during this process informed the decision to use *El Norte, Mural,* and *Reforma* as the periodicals, and locations, of interest. I shifted from Google Trends to NewsBank in order to quantify term frequency per year (2000-2015), per periodical. In order to narrow search parameters and hone context specificity, I scrutinized the frequency and application of two terms in particular: "inmigración" ("immigration") and "frontera" ("border"). To specify the type of immigration and the specific border of interest as the ones between the U.S. and Mexico, I included the terms "EEUU" ("U.S.") and "Estados Unidos" ("United States") as sub-parameters of search results. During the fifteen-year period of interest, the term "inmigración" appeared 363 times while "frontera" appeared on 1,366 occasions with a total of 1,729 headline occurrences. Just as with the LTN, the incidence of term appearance ebbed and flowed according to national socio-political context, and is demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2:

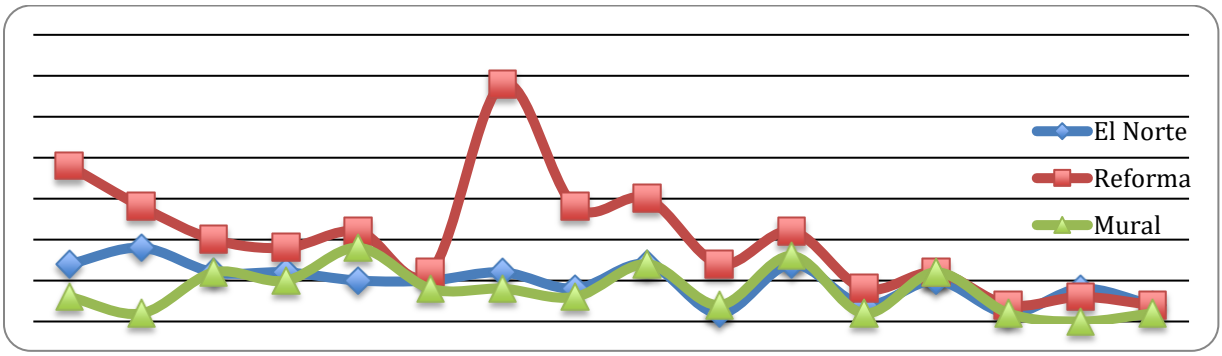

Table 1. Frequency of the term Inmigración/Immigration

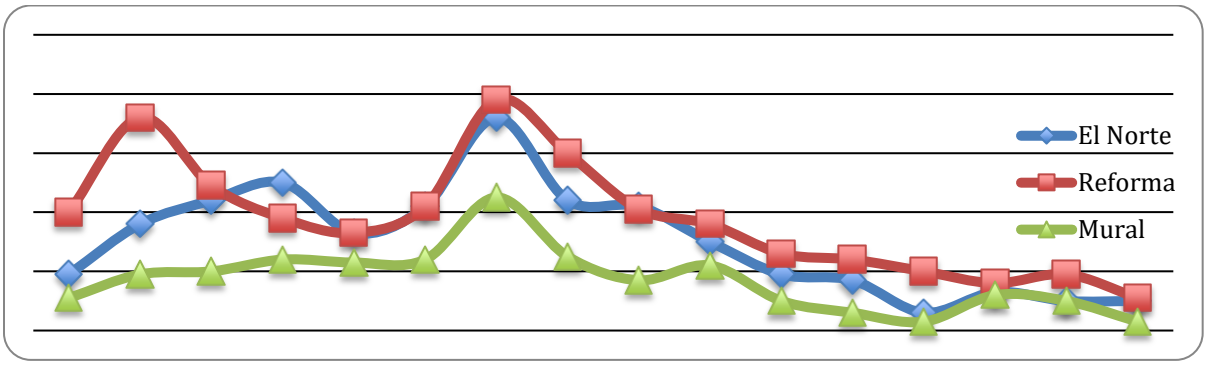

Table 2. Frequency of the term Frontera/Border

The newspaper *Reforma* consistently led with both terms in regard to headline usage frequency with 162 (inmigracón) and 605 (frontera), a logical outcome since *Reforma* is based in Mexico City.

The next stage involved a systematic document analysis of each of the headlines. In the subsequent review of content associated with each, I noticed a shift in discursive tone when comparing the start of the millennium versus the end of its first quarter. Four distinct themes prominently emerged as I examined the verbiage used: patience and conformity, the heroization of border crossers, blurring "terrorismo" ("terrorism") and "turismo" ("tourism"), and being fed up with a fantasy.

Patience and Conformity

At the start of the year 2000 (pre-September 11th), "flexibilizar" ("ease")[16] was not an uncommon partner with "inmigración" ("immigration") or "EEUU" ("U.S."), suggesting a willingness to both bend and wait as the U.S. flirted with immigration reform that would benefit Mexico. Language was used that detailed the vast opportunity (employment and wealth) available in the U.S. accented with a demonstrable tendency to encourage migration north and to hypothesize about a budding Mexican prosperity. Around October of 2000, the tone changed; "resistir" ("resist") was a constant companion with "U.S." or "EEUU," as were frequent calls to "presionar" ("compel") and "exigir justicia" ("demand justice") on account of raids that were taking place and the political dragging of feet that was forestalling reform efforts. This

[16] In the sense of rules or regulations.

contributed to a deep sense of frustration that "aún no abran" ("they still do not/will not open") either the border or the nation to their southern neighbor. The emphasis and recurrence of the word "aún" ("still") underscores a sense of disconcertment and certain astonishment that an opening of the U.S.-Mexican border to better enable Mexican nationals to cross with ease had still not yet come to fruition.

Nearly one year later, in August 2001, one has the sense that yet again a carrot was being dangled in regard to the possibility of immigration reform with the frequent suggestion of "amnestia para ilegales" ("amnesty for illegals [undocumented] individuals"),[17] a program to permit "obtención automática de ciudadanía" ("automatic granting of citizenship"), and even the presence of an "esfuerzo para restructurar la política de inmigración" ("effort to restructure immigration policy") in the form of political coalitions meeting in the United States. There is a duality in the reporting of these prospects since the anticipation of genuine possibility is still permeated by a distinct feeling that the U.S. was hesitating and stalling. Still, it is curious to note that one month prior to the September 11th attacks there was much coverage that gave the appearance of considerable dialogue transpiring between the two nations (and more importantly, among American leaders themselves) regarding the potential for increased and improved Mexican access to and legal retention in the U.S.

Heroization of Border Crossers

By 2001, the social effects that so much migration to the north was having on Mexican communities and familial/communal relationships were becoming more urgently acknowledged. Lucrecia Santibáñez published the Op-Ed "Inmigración" in *El Norte* on June 20, 2001 that perhaps best vocalized the feeling of discomfort with the phenomena. She blamed then President Vicente Fox for manipulating the position of migrants who were "huyendo al norte" ("fleeing to the North [to the U.S.]") and for using them as a tool for strategic political rhetoric, one that Fox supposed could be used to convince the U.S. that Mexicans were helpful (arriving in spades with an eager disposition to aid in the betterment of the U.S. in both a literal structural sense by providing manual labor and in a cultural sense by offering enrichment). In a broad view, Santibáñez uses the implications made by Fox of the "eager" Mexican migrant to warp them into a sardonic personification with the intent to make the point that such an impression of sweeping Mexican simpleminded alacrity is absurd (8).

As a rebuttal to Fox, Santibáñez encourages a more micro-level perspective that border-crossing migrants are "valiosos" ("precious"), possessing a "fortaleza de carácter" ("strength of character"), and to consider how much of a shame (a bona fide tragedy) it is that "miles de nuestros mejores gentes se vayan todos los días a trabajar en tierra ajena. Pero no se les puede culpar" ("thousands of our best people leave every day to work in a foreign land. But you cannot blame them") (8). This reflects the sentiment that the "culpa" ("blame") for such mass exodus lies with perfidious Mexican politicians (like Fox) for not working towards the betterment of Mexican social, cultural, and structural restoration to keep Mexicans in Mexico.

In response to widespread reporting that the U.S. was undertaking efforts to make not only prosperity, but basic survival a challenge, Mexican newspaper headlines were punctuated by a significant increase in reporting that emphasized the human element of illegal immigration and border crossing in 2005 (Cornelius 4, López 7, Muñoz Bata 17). This was precisely the opposite of the dehumanizing reporting efforts (driven by the LTN) taking place at the same time in the U.S.

As demonstrated by Tables 1 and 2 above, 2006 was a pivotal year in terms of immigration and border related coverage in Mexico. This was also true in the U.S., though despite such congruence, there is again a radical disparity in what was being reported between the two nations. Published on December 21, 2006, the article "Frontera Invisible: Lecciones navideñas para el Congreso de EU" ("Invisible Border: Christmas Lessons for the U.S. Congress"), Muñoz Bara vehemently criticizes the occurrence of raids and abuses

[17] Those not legally residing in the U.S.

(identification theft, battery, etc.) reportedly taking place by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. He decries the "trágica interrupción de la vida familiar" ("tragic interruption of family life") (12) perpetuated by such ostensibly shameful intrusion and assault at the hands of the *gringo* law. Guided by verbiage such as "trágica" ("tragic"), a reader with a stake in the situation (a child whose parents or relatives are in the U.S., a parent whose child has been sent north to live with immigrants, individuals who rely on remittance income, etc.) would develop sympathy towards the appalling and grievous manner in which "our" family members, peers, and national compatriots are being treated by "them" for seemingly no logical or objective reason, cultivating in turn a sense of needing to join together in solidarity.

Much of the contempt which underscores the article is coupled with the apt declaration that "los ilegales forman la columna vertebral de industrias como la agricultura, la industria de la construcción y la de restaurantes y hotels" ("the illegals [undocumented individuals] form the backbone of industries like agriculture, the construction industry, and restaurants and hotels") (12). Quite the opposite happens in U.S. newspaper counterparts as many of the "myths" often relied on to convince U.S. nationals that Mexican immigrants are a threat to national security and economic stability are simply untrue (Chomsky, "How Immigration" and "Jobs," Golash-Boza, Ramos, "Latino Wave").

As it is the most often repeated myth, pausing for a moment to examine the falsehood that "Immigrants Take American Jobs" with its socio-political cousin that "Immigrants Compete with Low-Skilled Workers and Drive Down Wages" is worthwhile (Chomsky 3-29). As Chomsky and others (Chavez, Golash-Boza, Guitérrez, "Walls and Mirrors," Ramos "Latino Wave" and "Manifesto") note, deregulation and deindustrialization (two by-products of the 1981-1989 Ronald Reagan presidential era), coupled with the nature of jobs changing in the U.S. during the 1980s and 1990s, are much more significant and verifiable reasons why job loss has been encountered among American citizens in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (3-10). Corroborated by data collected by the Pew Research Center, "no consistent pattern emerges to show that native-born workers suffered... from increased numbers of foreign-born workers" (Kochnar). In fact, it is much more accurate to state that undocumented Latinos/as living and working in the U.S. are actually an economic asset, adding an estimated $10 billion to the American economy each year, $4.5 billion of which is in tax revenue (Ramos, "Manifesto" 41-44).

Yet, as Chavez has already noted, while such verifiability is often not sufficient to deter the effects that a LTN has on the masses, perhaps the rhetoric of esteemed media figures might be. Such was the premise of television personality and comedian Stephen Colbert's involvement with the *Take Our Jobs* campaign sponsored by the United Farm Workers (UFW) in 2010. The campaign invited any American citizen or legal resident "who wish to replace them [migrant workers] in the field[s]" (Chomsky, "How Immigration" 125), and who believed immigrant farm workers were taking away jobs, to fill out a job application and be connected to farm employers.

On July 8, 2010 when Arturo Rodriguez, then President of the UFW, appeared on *The Colbert Report* television show, only three people in the entire nation had signed on to participate (or rather, 0.0000019% of the 153 million eligible labor force in July of 2010), inspiring Colbert himself to join the promotion and spend a day on a migrant farm as a farm worker. Colbert's popularity cannot be overstated, nor can the role he has played in several past social and political campaigns, and while his involvement certainly drew attention to the cause, in the end only seven individuals in the entire U.S. followed through (Chomsky, "How Immigration" 125).

Returning to the theme at hand, Democratic President Barack Obama was a leader in whom Mexican immigrants had placed a tremendous amount of faith (Ramos "Country for All"). While that sentiment had diminished by the 2012 election cycle, it had not entirely disappeared and was indeed possible to revitalize, particularly in the aftermath of the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (known colloquially as SB 1070), and with the enormous boost in popularity that resulted from the executive action taken by Obama to enact the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) order in June

of 2012. Among the provisions included in SB1070 was permission for law enforcement officers to determine immigration status by appearance, and to impose severe penalties on individuals who sheltered, hired, or transported "unregistered aliens" (Chomsky, "How Immigration" 152-180; Fiore; Vargas). It was widely denounced as being among the strictest and flagrantly racist anti-immigration measures passed in recent federal legal memory. While the Supreme Court struck down three provisions of the Act on the grounds that they were unconstitutional, one was sustained: the granting of permission to law enforcement officers to check immigration status if an individual were to be lawfully stopped with credible reason.

Throughout 2012 and 2013, Mexican newspaper headlines and articles again cited immigrants and immigration to the U.S. as being the absolute "columna vertebral" ("backbone") of the U.S., emphasizing the significant financial and social contributions that migrants make, and how there was still ample time to amend the many "intentos fallidos" ("failed attempts") towards Mexicans and Mexico as Obama was ushered into a second term in office. The delusion was yet again short-lived. Between late 2013-2015 terms such as "indiferencia" ("indifference"), "desigualdad" ("inequality"), and "hipocresía" ("hypocrisy") had assumed center stage in Mexican headlines, as had extensive reporting on the phenomenon of migrant "criminalización" ("criminalization"), the "separación" ("separation") between mothers and children, and the purportedly widespread efforts to form "caza migrante" ("migrant hunting") and "caza ilegales" ("illegal [undocumented] hunting") movements.

Blurring Terrorismo and Turismo

By March of 2002, a definitively derisive tone takes the center stage in headlines and commentary, particularly in regard to what were seen as grave errors committed on behalf of the U.S. as what was increasingly perceived as a reactionary response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, and the policy changes (especially with border entry) that resulted. There are multiple accusations that the U.S. was confusing "terrorismo con turismo" ("terrorism with tourism") and had launched an out-and-out "campaña preventiva" ("preventive campaign") against Mexican migrants and undocumented workers (Muñoz Bata 19).

Such accusations continue well into 2003 with noteworthy coverage on the increased pressure that U.S. businesses felt in regard to hiring undocumented workers and being at risk for immigration violations. This marked a distinct shift since traditionally many legal policies regarding undocumented workers were not enforced, or were blatantly ignored, since it was somewhat (clandestinely) universally acknowledged that undocumented migrant workers were vital to the sustainability and stability of certain U.S. business sectors such as agriculture, landscaping, construction, food service, and domestic work (Chomsky, "How Immigration" 113-151).

Furthermore, there was an increase in the observation that the September 11th attacks had caused a paradox in terms of immigration policy and "foreigner fear" between the U.S. and Mexico, a point that is particularly driven home by Sergio Muñoz Bata in his January 10, 2003 *El Norte* article: "El hecho de que todos los terroristas que participaron en el ataque fueron extranjeros residentes en el país ha determinado que las políticas migratorias U.S. hayan sido subordinadas a las políticas de seguridad nacional" ("The fact that all of the terrorists who participated in the attack were foreign residents in the country has caused U.S. migration policies to be made secondary to national security policies") (19).

The year 2004 ushered in a focus on the mounting wave of racism against Mexican migrants living and working in the United States. This is evident in a particular set of reportage mounted by *Mural* in December that homed in on specific hate-groups and their efforts to launch targeted programs to "detener" ("deter") immigration, "deportar" ("deport") undocumented individuals, and "quitarlos" ("take away access") as many public services as possible (public education, access to medical care, food and housing assistance, etc.) (Pacheco 6). It is interesting to note that the author of the article, "Piden actuar contra el racismo"

("Ask to act against racism"), depicts these "grupos de odio" ("hate-groups") as a fringe movement. Yet in U.S. media such a stance of demanding steps to stop, deport, and restrict was exceedingly common, not on the fringe at all. It could be argued then that the cry to take these steps was much louder and widespread in the U.S. than the *Mural* article suggests, echoing a similar PR miscalculation with that which was previously discussed.

Together with these hate-groups, the thought that a social "frontera invisible" ("invisible border") had become insurmountable had gained traction in headlines and commentary. This was partly due to Republican President George Bush being re-elected, a leader who Mexican nationals had become entirely disenchanted with due to his change in stance about immigration reform between 2000-2004 (Ramos, "Latino Wave"). His re-election, and the invisible social and political borders for Mexican immigrants that were becoming solidified in the U.S., were often termed as being "miope" (short-sighted), blatantly "discriminatoria" ("discriminatory"), extremely "mal intencionada" ("ill-intentioned"), and even "suicida" ("suicidal").

Political commentary was not exclusive to President Bush or the U.S. political scene. Reporting on Mexican President Vicente Fox depicted him as a complete subordinate to Washington and dysfunctional in how he and his associates were operating. This point is emphasized by Luis Enrique Pachecho in his November 22, 2004 article, "Lamentan ausencia de política integral" ("Regretting the Absence of Comprehensive Policy"): "La política de Fox ha tomado en cuenta a los migrantes... pero desafortunadamente con una idea central: que sigan mandando dinero" ("Fox's policy has considered the migrants... but unfortunately with one central idea: that they keep sending money") (16).

January 2010 headlines and coverage marked a return towards reporting on the potential to revitalize "el sueño migratorio" ("migratory dream") and a sense of an "esperanza recargada" ("recharged hope"). Such sentiments were short-lived; by July much of the dialogue about immigration in both nations was engrossed by the passing and implementation of previously discussed Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act in Arizona (SB 1070).

The signing of the law on April 23, 2010 ignited a firestorm. Among articles published in *El Norte* and *Mural* during June, July, and August of 2010, there was frequent discussion concerning similar laws being passed in other states. Many went so far as to offer comprehensive lists of locales that had enacted similar policies, presumably so that those migrating could avoid them (Díaz Briseño 15, Cázares, Corpus, and Ramírez 3). With an overtone of "at last," in the July 15, 2010 article, "Obama y la inmigración" ("Obama and Immigration") Gabriela de la Paz observed how efforts to enact SB 1070 would "obligará a que muchos candidatos a cargos de elección se declaren abiertamente a favor o en contra de una reforma migratoria" ("oblige many candidates seeking election openly declare to be in favor or against migration reform") (9), anticipatory of a publicly definitive posturing that many, if not all, U.S. politicians had been previously unwilling to do. But, as she notes, such an "obligation" contains a trap not so much for politicians, but for Mexican immigrants who might seek to benefit from the outcry against the anti-illegal immigration law:

> [T]odo discurso en torno a la inmigración, legal o ilegal, está inmerso en una narrativa del inmigrante ideal, cuya imagen es aquél que llegó en barco hace décadas, a principios del siglo 20 o después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Es decir, no el que cruza la frontera por tierra, con lo que claramente se trata de europeos. (All discourse about immigration, legal or illegal, is immersed in a narrative about the ideal immigrant, whose image is one that arrived by boat decades ago, at the beginning of the twentieth century or after the Second World War. In other words, not the one who crosses the border by land, which clearly is about Europeans). (9)

Fed up with the Fantasy

The year 2006 solidified the belief that the border zone, and any potential for immigration reform that would facilitate improved relations between the two nations, had become "Un muro de mentiras" ("A Wall of Lies") (Vargas Llosa 2). There was a palpable sense of bewilderment and befuddlement, a veritable "representación teatral" ("theater performance") on behalf of U.S. politicians that had led only to a "muro de fantasia" ("wall of fantasy"), one that was entirely "imaginario" ("imaginary") (Vargas Llosa 2). Vargas Llosa offers the statistic that between 2005-2006 "hispánicos" (Hispanics) had sent a staggering sum of 45 million dollars in remittance money, or 60% more than in 2003, to their families. Vargas Llosa makes the astute observation that such a figure would be easy to manipulate as a negative (and indeed was by U.S. media), but the opposite is true:

> [L]os prejuicios deducen que los inmigrantes están causando una hemorragia terrible del patrimonio norteamericano. Pero la *verdadera lectura* de esa cifra debe ser, más bien de admiración y de entusiasmo pues ella quiere decir que los inmigrantes de origen latinoamericano han producido el ultimo año, *para los Estados Unidos*, una riqueza *cuatro o cinco veces mayor* que se ha quedado allí y servido para incrementar la renta nacional.
> (The biases conclude that immigrants are causing a terrible hemorrhage of North American heritage. But the *true interpretation* of that figure should be, rather admiringly and enthusiastically, because it means to say that immigrants of Latin American origin in the last year have produced, *for the United States*, a wealth *four or five times greater* that has remained there and served to increase the national income). (2)

This is further corroborated in an article by Margarita Vega in which she explains how "[p]or cada dólar de remesa enviada a México, los paisanos dejan 25 más en Estados Unidos" ("for each remittance dollar sent to Mexico, 25 more are left in the United States") and that "[l]os migrantes mexicanos aportan a la economía U.S. más de 615 mil millones de dólares al año frente a los 24 mil millones de dólares que envían como remasas" ("Mexican migrants contribute to the U.S. economy more than 615 billion dollars a year compared to the 24 billion dollars sent as remittances") (4). This information was simply not being shared with the U.S. public on a large scale, or not in a manner that was emphatic enough to counter the LTN. Vargas Llosa and Vega suggest a sense of incredulity that such a wealthy, limitless, and eminent nation as the U.S. could not only be so unwilling to "share" with precisely those individuals who contribute to its colossal affluence, but engage in an aggressive offense to eradicate their presence, an extermination that would ultimately prove extremely economically detrimental.

The year 2007 ushered in louder calls to "denunciar" ("condemn") the U.S. and its immigration practices, and to continue unifying efforts to oppose and adopt a posture of zero tolerance. By the summer of 2008, immigration reform and overall relations between Mexico and the U.S. were often categorized as a "tema pendiente" ("pending topic"), again emphasizing the notion that they are "still" not important enough to be front and center in the form of unilateral action (even during a U.S. election year and despite mounting humanitarian pressure). In a curious turn of events, Mexico announced in 2008 new measures to create jobs to attract foreigners to Mexico and make entry and residence in the country easier (Barajas 4). It is significant to note that the job sectors specifically seeking an influx of immigrant labor were taxi drivers, gardeners, and agriculture, or rather precisely the types of jobs Mexican immigrants were obtaining, and employment sectors that they were bolstering, in the U.S. (Barajas 4, Chomsky, "How Immigration" 113-151).

Conclusions

The newspaper headlines discussed here establish that there is a meaningful degree with which calculated jargon is propagated within Mexican consumer spheres and that they do encourage micro-

narratives to veer one discursive direction or another. When held up against the ways in which such periodical narrative construction occurs in the U.S.-based Latino Threat Narrative (LTN), an interesting contrast emerges. While U.S. headline lingo tends to exaggerate, distort, and deceive in order to rally consumers around nationalistic interests, Mexican headline narratives tend to swing towards decrying happenings with emphatic accuracy. The regularity of specific terms in Mexican newspaper headlines between 2000-2015 related to *inmigración* ("immigration") and *frontera* ("border") confirm that while aspects of the threat narrative formula application are slightly different from the LTN version observed in the U.S. (e.g., falsification versus accuracy), a similarly influenced socio-political response is present.

Terms that appeared across all three periodicals with noted frequency in regards to *inmigración* ("immigration") to the U.S. include the following: *flexibilizar* ("ease"), *aún* ("still"), *resistir* ("resist"), *dudar* ("doubt"), *mentira* ("lie"), *oposición* ("opposition"), *presionar* ("put pressure on"), *justicia* ("justice"), *injusticia* ("injustice"), *discriminación* ("discrimination"), *rostro humano* ("human face"), *crisis, infrahumano* ("subhuman"), *integral* ("vital"), *columna vertebral* ("backbone"), *revivir* ("rekindle"), *fracaso* ("failure"), *contradictorio* ("contradictory"), *frenar* ("put on the breaks"), *anti inmigrante* ("anti immigrant"), and *caza inmigrante* ("immigrant hunting").

"Titulares" (Headlines) published in Mexican periodicals between 2000-2015 served to defend Mexican interests, expose and challenge U.S. duplicity, yet also to establish a set of different priorities for the Mexico of the millennium, namely, to bolster a sense of Mexicanness that was not deferential to its northern neighbor. The careful review and subsequent selection of specific words or phrases published in the headlines of *El Norte*, *Reforma*, and *Mural*, between 2000-2015 addresses the absence of such attention to Mexican print media counterparts. While Chavez's discussion is paramount to the socio-political situation of Mexican immigrants who are literally inside the borders of the U.S., a perspective was previously lacking in regard to the influence that calculated discursive formations crafted by Mexican print media sources have on Mexican nationals who reside in Mexico.

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